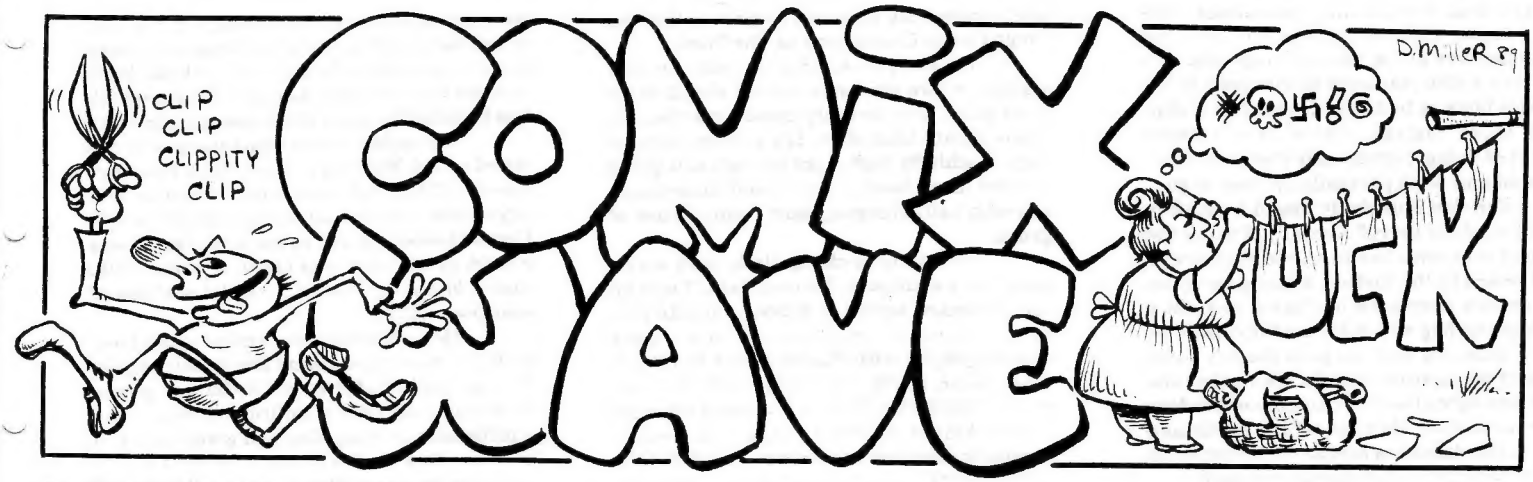

WHAT'S THIS SHIT?

The early bird swallowed a careless worm and took off into the wild blue yonder. After a short while, the worm stuck his head out of the bird's ass and asked: *Hey, bird, how high up are we?* The bird replied, *About 5,000 feet.* Said worm: *You wouldn't shit me, would you?*

People who write on shithouse walls
Should wrap their shit in little round balls
And people who read these rhymes of wit
Should eat those little round balls of shit!

The little worm lowers itself
by a self-shat thread.
-Jack Kerouac

Ah, you were never born. A bird shit on a fence post and the sun hatched you out.

That bozo can fall in a shithouse and come out smelling like a rose.

She thinks her shit don't stink.

He who farts in church sits in his own pew.

You have to say this line fast:
See how that ship sinks.

Keep messin' 'roun' here, boy, an' you gonna be asshole deep in alligator shit.

Life is a shit sandwich.

That was a good shitkicker.

I love that shitkickin' music.

S.O.S. Same ol' shit.

You got shit for brains.

You just don't give a shit, do you?

Shit on a shingle for breakfast again!

One of the systems at Copymat where I typeset this newsletter is named Asshole, so you have to get into Asshole to see what programs are available. I noted one file named SHIT, so I said *What's this shit?* and I opened it up. A young woman had left a paper on Medieval poetry there along with her immediate feeling about the subject. Holy Shit, Batman!

We Americans are familiar with shit. We know all about it. We take a lot of it on our jobs. We know trouble is coming if it hits the fan. We know the trouble is worse than usual if the shit is deep. If something doesn't go the way we thought it would, we say Shit! When we don't care, we say we don't give a shit, a reason why the foreign visitor is likely to think most of us live constipated lives. If we come across something unusual we say *what kinda shit is that?* If we hear a hard luck story and want to show that we're not really sympathetic with the teller, we say *tough shit!* Our mothers tell us to clean up that shit in our rooms [always at the precise moment when we are on our way out the back door to play some baseball] and we think *oh, shit, why do I hafta do that NOW??* and if mom cleans the room up we are likely to tell the guys later that mom threw out all my shit. She, of course, never says shit; she says *things.*

Mothers have a special relationship to shit. Freud spent a lot of time explaining the way mothers turn shit into gold. The idea is simple. A kid learns that his shit is valuable to mom, because she spends so much time and emotional energy trying to get that shit in a certain place at a certain time, in a toilet or a potty and not on the bedroom or living room floor. The kid knows he's got some valuable stock and he learns that if he uses it wisely he gets increased dividends. Mom will beg, plead, and bribe, anything to keep that shit going into the pot. A mom lives in terror of coming into a kid's room and finding shit smeared all over the walls. This form of creative act extended into the adult world was known in the fifties as Abstract Expressionism. I'm sure more than one hip mom looked at the works of Jackson Pollock and said *what's this shit?*

My dad always said *poop*. When I was little, I can remember my mother saying *poopie*, a word I always hated. Elzie Segar had a character in his POPEYE strip called Poopdeck Pappy. In his PORNOGRA FOLLIES, Curt McDowell has a scene in which the anus is referred to as a poop shoot. One of the grossest jokes I remember hearing as a boy went like this. *A boy goes into the bathroom and finds his mother leaning over the tub. He stands there looking at her nether parts for a minute then asks, "hey, mom, what's that?" "That's my tiger," she answers. "Boy," says the kid, "he must be a mean bastard. He's got blood in one eye and shit in the other."*

I'm using *he* in this essay because I was a boy, not because girls don't have the same experience with childhood *gold.*

Shit was one of the first *dirty* words I heard when I ventured out of the yard and into the wider world of the street and playground in Lincoln, Nebraska, circa 1940. Boys used it for its shock value at first. It made parents go for their belts or ping pong paddles. Later it was just another verbal habit. Girls never used it and I was truly shocked when I met some girls at Walgreen's Drugstore who not only used shit, but fuck, dick, and cunt as well. We boys thought that was our little secret, you see, that we could go around saying shit, piss, fuck, goddamn, cunt, pussy, and all that stuff all we wanted to, but like the boys in LITTLE LULU we banded together and rejected the use of such coarse language from little girls. Coming from one of the guys on the baseball field, shit was manly, tough, grown up, but coming from a girl it was nasty. Girls who talked dirty were considered fast, loose, and easy. If a nice girl said *shit!* you knew she had been pushed too far and that it was only a brief lapse of decorum. She was still a nice girl. The bad girls said shit all the time and, of course, they were simply affirming their equal rights, but we didn't think that way in the forties. There were only good and bad girls and boys then and good girls never said shit. As far as we guys were concerned, they probably never did it either.

Shit, for those of you who have never heard the word, is excrement, waste, do-do, poop, feces, fecal matter, ca-ca, or Number 2. Remember Bill Cosby asking why his grade school teacher had to know whether or not he was one-ing it or two-ing it?

Shit is all right in foreign languages. Remember Lieutenant Scheisskopf in Joseph Heller's CATCH-22? His name means Shithead.

As a boy, I remember working men saying *I gotta take a shit* and I always

THIS is an anagram of **SHIT!**

COMIX WAVE 83. January, 1990,
© Clay Geerdes. Box 7081;, Berkeley, CA 94707. Logo by David Miller. The All Dirty Word Issue. Not to be shown to squeamish parents!

thought that was a funny misnomer. The only people who really take shit are the coprophagiacs at the mental hospitals. You don't take a shit; you leave it. Vito used to tell his little boys at bedtime: *Go and do a shit.* Much more logical. There is a certain amount of doing, particularly if you are four-years-old and don't particularly have to go.

Shit fire! Somebody tossed a match in the old outdoor privy? Actually, I think the origin of that term lies in an old Hallowe'en joke I heard in the forties. A guy goes up on the victim's porch. In his hand he's got a brown paper bag which he has filled with his own or some dog shit. He puts the bag down and gets out a stick match. He strikes the match and lights the bag, banging on the door at the same time. He runs off the porch and hides in the darkness across the street so he can watch as the victim stamps out the fire.

In college in San Francisco, I had a drama teacher who loved to talk about shit. He had to intellectualize it, of course, and he referred to the usage of dirty language as scatology. I know, you always thought scatology was the study of scat-singing. Just like city people are unlikely to know that road apples are horse turds. Anyway, this teacher got his jollies telling all of us about the intricate scatological references in some European playwright and while one would expect to find articles re scatology in folklore or abnormal psychological journals it is likely that some wag has already done one on the scatology of underground cartoonists like Robert Crumb. Crumb invented Mr. Snoid who was flushed down the toilet and lived for awhile in the sewer. The Sewer Snoid was quite popular in the sixties. Crumb drew out his personal anal sex fantasies in BIG ASS COMIX, probably one of the strangest comic books published in the early 1970s. In BIG ASS, the Snoid actually spends a lot of time inside a woman's anus. When he is outside, he often rides on her hips. Nearly all of the women in Crumb's comix have large hips and legs in contrast to the traced models in the overground comic books.

Ballet dancers leave each other with a *merde!* For them the French word for shit means good luck. It's like an actor saying *break a leg!*

One year Captain Carrot cartoonist Scott Shaw covered himself with peanut butter and entered the costume contest at the San Diego Comic Convention as The Turd.

In Haight-Ashbury back in the sixties, when someone talked about some *good shit,* they usually meant marijuana. "Man, I hate that shit . It's a dizzy, dopey; high, a schluffy high. I got enough shit going around in my head. I don't need some dumb schvako hallucinogen," said Lenny Bruce of grass.

To Lenny, a cheap little club was a *toilet* or a *shithouse* . He once said, "I was on the awkward squad in school. Couldn't do shit." Lenny published his own autobiography with Playboy back in 1965. It was called HOW TO TALK DIRTY AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE. A few years after his death Albert Goldman used Lawrence Schiller's research to produce LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: LENNY BRUCE (1971). To read about Lenny in relation to Boomer Humor, see Tony Hendra's excellent historical memoir GOING TOO FAR. "Dope," writes Goldman, "so deadens the muscles of the rectum that most heavy users have to decide each day which is more important--to get high or take a shit."

I had the honor of being one of the many random souls to be insulted by Lenny Bruce when he played the Off Broadway Club in North Beach in 1965. He did not know it was me standing out there on the sidewalk with my wife with a small group of curiosity seekers, but he called us all freeloaders anyway. We were supposed to come in the club and join the dwellers in the smoky darkness, buy our two overpriced watery drinks and pay for the privilege of having our lifestyle trashed by a junkie. I just smiled and formed a fuck you, Lenny, and walked on. But Bruce got to me. I have an ego, too. Who was this little shit who thought he had the right to dump on people just because he had a mike in his hand? Bruce catered to public masochism and he was quite successful at it, being a masochist himself. Time and again he was warned that he couldn't say words like cocksucker onstage and he went out and said them. He was busted in March of 1962 for saying cocksucker and after that his life was a series of busts and trials. He was seen as a pathfinder in the sixties, a martyr in the war for freedom of expression. By some. By the majority he was seen just as a little boy who thought it was cute to say dirty words in public. *What is a clean word to society?* asked Lenny in 1965. Well, it wasn't cocksucker, Lenny. Or shit, which has become the word of all meanings in 1989.

Consider the various usages of the word in Ed McBain's latest 87th Precinct novel, LULLABY. *Everytime a cop in this city shoots a black man, you got deep shit (43).* Convicts *shoot the shit in the yard (50).* It was a cold, gray shitty day (116). A junkie talks about *knowing how to kick the shit out of somebody (223).*

Hey, *shit happens,* and you just have to deal with it. If you don't like it, shit on you. *He's as full of shit as a Christmas goose.* This is usually said of politicians who make a profession of lying. *Boy, you gotta lotta shit in here.* Means, the place is crowded. The shit can be good like a mint collection of PLASTIC MAN or bad like a lot of bent up soda pop cans and leftover pizza boxes. *Flush that shit down the toilet!* Usually means a junkie is about to get busted and is flushing away the evidence before the cops break in. *Boy, was that shitty!* Often said of a bad movie or concert. *Who shit in your face?* A put down used by boys in the forties, but some just thought this was a witty way to greet a friend. If you got offended, the wit was likely to say *tough shit!* or *tough shitski!* There was always a lot of *heavy shit* coming down on the playground. The boys often learned their macho poses from saturday afternoon *shitkickers* [western movies]. In the Navy, we often had *shit on a shingle* for breakfast [chipped beef on toast]. What's for chow was answered with *S.O.S.* [Same old shit]. The toilet was the head or the *shitter.* Talking was *shooting the shit.* If you got reprimanded by a senior officer, you *took a ration of shit.* One of the favored epithets of our Company Commander in boot camp in San Diego was *Wipe that shit-eating grin off your face, sailor!*

The old Boatswain's Mates, many of them lifetime alkies had the most colorful language. Tell them a story and they would let you know *sonny, you can't shit an old turd.* I remember one old salt stumbling through the compartment on his way to the head singing:

Ratshit, batship, belly full of beans,
Bullshit in the Boatswain's jeans.

"HE'S A GAS!" - WRECKS REED.
"HE DOESN'T HAVE TO FIGHT CRIME. CRIMINALS AVOID HIM." — BARBRA WAWA.

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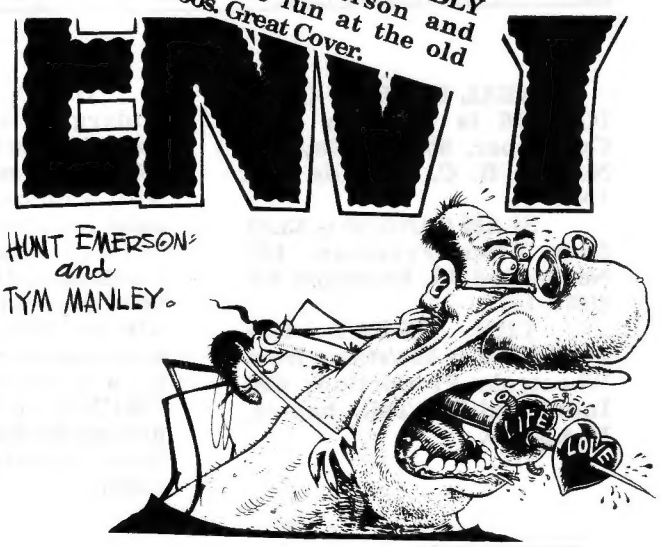
COMIX WAVE 83. February, 1990, © Clay Geerdes. Box 7081;, Berkeley, CA 94707.

My favorite comic title this fall has to be Caliber's CHEERLEADERS FROM HELL. Devil worship, Ninjas, and demonic possession! Oy! What, no Nazis or Kluxers?

And for sure you'll want Knockabout's SEVEN DEADLY SINS. Hunt Emerson and others poke fun at the old bugaboos. Great Cover.



COMIX PLUGOLA

Jim Conatser's mini MUTT series. 4 issues, $2 pp from him at POB 1337, Dubuque, IA 52001.

Ace Backwards has joined us with a TWISTED IMAGE newsletter. Ace is one of Berkeley's funniest contemporary cartoonists. See sample strips on this page. Send him a couple of bucks and get his stuff. 1630 University Ave., Apt 26, Berkeley, CA 94703.

Did you notice MAD 291 had Mutant Ninja Turtles all over the front and back covers? The Turtle quarter goes live in March of 1990. Maybe you can trade some of your bat stuff for some turtle stuff. My most frightening turtle experience was walking into Long's Drugstore in El Cerrito, California and nearly running into a giant display of Ninja Turtle breakfast cereal! Shades of Kellogg's PEP!

EL VIBORA 115, and 116 contain a perverse view of Alice's adventures in a new kind of wonderland. $7 each from J. M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.

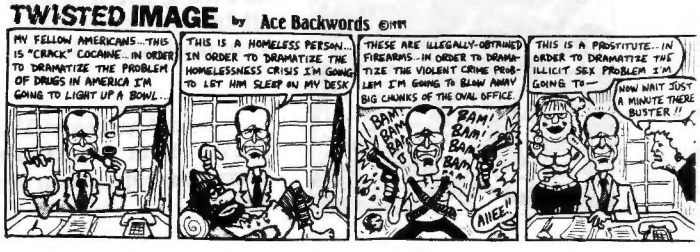
CAUSE AND EFFECT COMIX is 40¢/stamp from Matthew Madden, 210 N. State ST., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

PRETTY POISON is 50¢/stamp from Paul Kent Sewell, 540 Stoneford Ave., Oakland, CA 94603.

MISC COMICS 31 is a fat Hallowe'en issue with a Hilary Barta cover. $2.20 pp from Randy Paske, 4841 Birch Ln, Gilbert, MN 55741-9631.

Randy Z. Crawford, Box 255, Minden, W. Va. has FREE ICE CREAM and S'MUD THING for 50¢/ Stamp ea. THE SENSUAL SHE-BULK and BAT STUD got for 25¢/stamp ea. Adults only. Send an age statement.

Rip Off Press, POB 4686, Auburn, CA 95604, has taken over publication of WIMMEN'S COMIX. #15 has a cover by and is edited by Phoebe Gloeckner. The issue deals with what it is like to grow up as a little girl. The title is open only to "Female" cartoonists, bit of reverse sexism there, but...



The *Acid Man Society* Series of Canadian artist Robert Pasternak continues with issues 10 and 11 available at this time. $1/stamp for the pair or the complete series to date (11 issues) for $5 pp. from Comix Wave.

THE ART OF GARRY HARDMAN contains some of the artist's best work. This is a 16 page DZ and it is $2.50 pp from Comix Wave.

REAL SCREAM COMICS #16 is #1 from Mike Culpepper, 808 Stanley St., Nelson, B. C., Canada V1L 1N7.

SLAM BANG 30 is $3.50 from Allen Freeman, 157 Northwood Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601-1477.

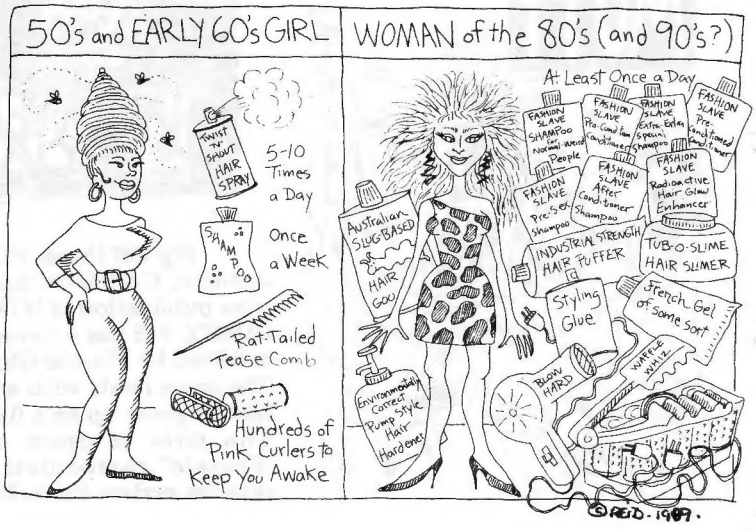
THE GREAT IMPOSSIBLE is 25¢/stamp from Wheatcake Productions, 690 Industrial Dr., Talla-hassee, FLA 32310.

BLAB is the nicest underground magazine to date. #4 reprints Jaxon's old INFINITY essay on ugs along with a follow-up suggesting some reasons ugs followed the pattern they did. Drew Friedman did the cover and the book is now published by Denis Kitchen. Nice book paper. It is a mistake to use cheap paper on a book. My copy of the CRUMB CHECKLIST is already browning at the edges from the acid in that cheap paper.

I got a kick out of Libby Reid's YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT TO BE POPULAR [PENGUIN, 1989, $6.95]. Reid lets you know in no uncertain graphics what it is like to be a woman on the loose in the eighties. The line drawings are in the Lynda Barry mode. Reid draws a lot like Susan Isaacs writes. If you haven't read SHINING THROUGH. Get one now.

Steve Willis paid me a visit on November 10, 1989. I took the creator of Morty the Dog on a tour of Telegraph Avenue and he got scammed and spare-changed all along refugee row. I asked Steve why the name Morty and he said he didn't know. He started drawing the dog as a kid and didn't get around to naming him until years later.

At Aardvard-Vanaheim, Dave Sim continues his Cerebus reprint project with #23.



If the thousands of people who use the Nimitz Freeway along the Oakland rim had not been at their tv sets waiting for the third game of the World Series to start, the quake of '89 would have wiped out a good chunk of our local population. People who were on the lower deck of the Cypress were swatted like flies when the upper deck folded up like an accordian. It was the end of the world for many. One man survived for several days in a concrete pocket, but he died a few days after his rescue. We go along day to day thinking how we have everything under control, then nature reminds us that there is no real security. The earth shifted on October 17, 1989, at 5:04. Rush hour traffic. People driving felt their cars start bouncing around. Many assumed they had a flat tire and pulled off to the side of the road to have a look. Once there, they found others like them, kicking their tires. The quake lasted 15 seconds of human time and people were puzzled. One woman I talked to said a gas station attendant told her she really had great shocks.

I was in bed when it all started. I worked in the garden, planted some Swiss chard, rearranged some of my bookcases, then laid down to rest. Clara had gone to her workout session over in Alameda. She drove back over the Cypress just after three. We talked to others who had gone through there just minutes before the collapse. In Santa Cruz, near the epicenter of the quake, her daughter left a bookstore on the mall just five minutes before the building collapsed into rubble.

Everything in my room shook. Books I had just arranged came falling down around me. The walls shook and my bed was riding around. I felt like the kid in POLTERGEIST. Clara was under the kitchen table.

When it stopped, or we thought it had stopped, we went outside. Neighbors were on the street. We all comforted each other. People who seldom spoke to us were friendly and affable.

Back in the house, I got the tube on. Channel 7 had their emergency power on and they were back onscreen. Cheryl Jennings took charge and pulled things together. During the next few hours we watched what had happened around the area as she read the bulletins coming in. We saw the section of the Oakland Bay Bridge that had fallen, the long section of the Cypress which had crumbled, the huge fire in the Marina, and we knew as we watched this coverage of the major damage that things were a lot worse for people without money to deal with the crisis. People were trapped in elevators. Water and gas mains were ruptured in some areas.

I was scheduled to work at Ashkenaz as usual that Tuesday evening, so I went on to work at 7:30, mainly to see what would happen and talk to some of the people from the neighborhood who were likely to drop in. Cajun dancing was scheduled and six people showed up. Two were unaware of the Quake. If you were driving and did not have the radio on and you were not a tv-oriented person, it was easy to remain ignorant of the whole thing the first few hours. One man had driven over from Tiburon, which means he came via the Richmond-San Rafael bridge which is on the opposite side of the bay and he hadn't felt anything. Things were normal on that side, though I suspect he might have seen the plume of black smoke over the Marina if he had looked in that direction. When I talked to people who had been in the parking lot at Candlestick Park having tailgate parties before the game, they said there was a pall of black smoke hanging over the entire area. Traffic was gridlocked everywhere and many slept in their pick-ups and vans in the parking lot rather than try the roads.

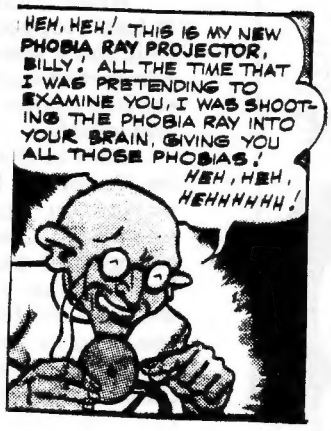
For the last few weeks, the Quake has given everyone something in common to talk about. Most conversations begin with where people were and what they were doing during the Big One. It was a great time to bar hop. No problem with an opening line that evening. The stores had a hell of a time. Bottled liquor and juice was all over the place. At a corner liquor store, wine was flowing out the door and down toward the gutter. The manager had to close because of the broken glass and the mess. The streets in San Francisco were filled with glass. During the quake, it rained plate glass in Union Square. Our friend Evelyn was in the Berkeley Theater watching OLD GRINGO when the walls started to shake and people just screamed in panic and bolted for the exits, pushing and shoving each other.

Since the media coverage you saw came out of San Francisco, the external view of the Quake damage was distorted for several days. We found out later that there had been severe damage on Treasure Island and people had been virtually trapped there for most of this last month. We have family and friends in Santa Cruz and there was major damage all over that community. The downtown mall was destroyed and most of the historic buildings had to be bulldozed. Houses were destroyed in the hills and some areas were isolated for a long time by mudslides on the roads.

The media people tended to focus on the middle-class and one seldom saw the condition of the poorer neighborhoods in the Bay Area, but the local media did a great job unifying and reassuring people. They worked round the clock and got the information out, told people where they could volunteer, who needed what, when and where. They gave us the big picture and we developed a lot of respect for Cheryl Jennings, Anna Chavez, Tony Russamano, Carol Ivy, Don Sanchez, and the others who got right into pulling things together and offsetting panic. They kept us informed about closed routes and fires and gas and water outages. The Red Cross and Salvation Army were at work minutes after the quake and after a few days they had more donations of clothing and goods than they had room to store.

What was toughest about the quake was the fearful attitude that came in its wake. We live near a bus line and whenever the bus passes, our house trembles a bit. Normally, we pay no attention, but now when something is moving around the kitchen that ought to be still we get that look. Aftershock? Is it going to happen again? The next morning when we went for the mail and to do some shopping, I expected to find the stores crowded with people stocking up, but the quake had not hit the neighborhood hard and for the most part people were sitting around eating Chicago pizza and going about their business as though nothing had happened. What you do after a disaster is try to go on with normal habits, to do what you would ordinarily do. We bought a few things for supper, got the mail, and drove home.

– C. L. '89 –



MISC. 32. 1.75 from Gary Paske, 4841 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741-9631.

CHARLES CLARENCE BECK
JUNE, 1910-NOV 22, 1989

I confess. When I was nine-years-old, I was a Captain Marvel Groupie. I never knew that Otto Binder wrote most of the stories or that C. C. Beck designed the character and pencilled the majority of the early stories. I just knew that the Big Red Cheese was my kind of character. I bought all the Captain Marvels and neatly kept them in a box near my bed. My mother threw them all away when we moved to California for the first time.

An illustrator from Minneapolis, Minnesota, C. C. Beck got the assignment of visualising a character conceived by Bill Parker named Captain Thunder. Originally, he had written a script in which six superheroes shared the lead, but Ralph Daigh, the executive director of Fawcett Publications, wanted one hero to compete with DC's Superman, not six.

Beck got into cartooning through a correspondence course. Later, he studied at Layton, then at the Chicago Academy and the University of Minnesota. He enjoyed his music as much as his art and the last time I saw him he was playing his guitar and singing folksongs at a San Diego Comic Convention. Leslie Carbarga, who did the book on Max Fleischer, accompanied Beck on the piano.

In 1933, Beck was working for Fawcett in Robbinsdale, Minnesota. He did panel cartoons for little mags like WHIZ BANG and SMOKEHOUSE MONTHLY. It was 1939 when he was moved into the front line and given his chance with Captain Thunder who was renamed Captain Marvel before his debut in WHIZ #1. The first WHIZ was hurried together for copyright purposes, but was changed before it was sent in or published, and Beck had to re-ink the name of the character on all of the artwork. It was the printer who decided Captain Marvel would read a suit of red underwear with a yellow lighting bolt on his chest. Artists had no control over the color scheme at the time.

Captain Marvel was a big financial success and all through the 1940's, there were spin-offs like THE MARVEL FAMILY, CAPTAIN MARVEL JR., and MARY MARVEL. It was Bill Parker who created the evil scientist, Dr. Sivana, by combining two Indian words, Siva and Nirvana. Sivana was Captain Marvel's Nemesis for nearly thirteen years. Ed Herron became Comic Editor at Fawcett October 10, 1940. He created Captain Marvel Jr. and brought Otto Binder and C. C. Beck together. The prolific Binder wrote 451 of the 618 Captain Marvel stories, 69 of 98 Mary Marvels, 162 Marvel Family adventures, and 161 Captain Marvel Jrs. He wrote 986 of 1743 stories or 57% of the entire Marvel saga (data from THE STERANKO HISTORY OF THE COMICS, V. 2, p. 12). Born August 26, 1911, Binder's creations include Mary Marvel, Tawky Tawny, the Talking Tiger, and Mr. Mind, the little worm who set out to rule the world. For other publishers, Binder invented the Young Allies, Miss America, Kid Eternity, Uncle Sam, Captain Battle, and Astounding Man. In his spare time, he wrote 27 S-F and horror stories for Bill Gaines at EC. Binder was inspired to go into a pulp writing career when he read the first issue of AMAZING STORIES in 1926. His brother Earl got into it first with Otto editing and soon the boys were jamming stories as Eando Binder. Otto wrote over 50,000 pages of comics!

Beck started his own shop in 1941 and freelanced his stuff to Fawcett. He edited violence out of his stories. DC sued Fawcett on September 5, 1941, but the suit did not go to trial until March of 1948. DC lost, but won on appeal. Captain Marvel was never a newspaper strip due to the lawsuit. Binder told Sterako (p. 21) Fawcett settled out of court, because the comics had peaked for them and they were just doing the smart thing financially by phasing them out in 1953.

Beck moved his studio to Florida, but did not find success in comics again. FATMAN failed in 1966.

— Clay Geerdes
1989.

CHANGES 1990

Seen as a sixties fad by establishment hacks, Underground comix have proven their staying power. A few of the original companies have dropped out of the game, but the majors: Last Gasp, Rip Off Press, and Kitchen Sink remain and the album concept which Harvey Kurtzman was promoting at conventions several years ago was assimilated and used effectively by both over and underground publishers during the eighties. Surprisingly, Fantagraphics, a company that grew out of a journal devoted to nostalgia has become a major publisher of underground anthologies, producing collections of Spain's TRASHMAN and the early work of Kim Deitch [BEYOND THE PALE] as well as THE COMPLETE CRUMB series which is in its 4th volume at this writing. It's nice to see these books coming out, particularly for those of us who research comix history. It is a lot handier to take a book off a shelf than to dig a comic book out of a bagged collection. These anthologies are well printed on good quality paper, and the patient reader now has the option to wait for the book just as he may wait for the paperback version of a hardback novel. No doubt, the dedicated collector buys both.

Comic book prices have gone up along with everything else and most of the undergrounds sold for $1.75-$3.50 during the late eighties, cheap compared to the prices many of the 50-cent first editions now command on the collectors' market. The albums sell for $8.95-$14.95 with the hardcover editions going for twice that amount. Signed editions of various volumes of THE COMPLETE CRUMB sold around Berkeley for $35-50,00. Due to the death of Marty Pahls, Crumb began writing his own autobiography via the introduction to volume 4, so it is likely this volume will cost a small fortune in the future. All of this is interesting because of what it says about the concept of *people's* comix which Crumb was promoting when he started ZAP back in 1967. The *underclass*, the regular *people*, have long been priced out of this market; most can barely afford the latest *Archie* off the rack at a 7-11. More and more comics, over and underground are coming out in deluxe editions that sell for $3.95 and more (DC's recent KILLING JOKE, the new DEADMAN series, etc).

I mention KILLING JOKE and DEADMAN, because these two books link directly with neo-EC trends in early seventies undergrounds like SKULL, SLOW DEATH FUNNIES, FANTAGOR, and PSYCHOTIC ADVENTURES ILLUSTRATED. These neo-ECs with their emphasis on violence, bizarre sex, gore, mutilation, and all kinds of slasher horror opened the door closed by the Comics Code of 1954. After waiting awhile to see what would happen, companies like Marvel and DC rushed in. The Code was effectively throw out the window and the eighties became a decade of comic books filled with sadomasochism and psycho-sexuality, some of it tongue in cheek (Chaykin's AMERICAN FLAGG), but a lot of it deadly serious (Alan Moore's WATCHMEN series and his KILLING JOKE).

Consider the moral shift of the eighties. Women's bare buns became socially acceptable on beaches, in tv commercials for soft drinks and other products, on MTV, on Dance Fever and television shows in general, as background cheesecake on MIAMI VICE and other cop shows like B. J. STRYKER, all of this made possible less by men's mags like PLAYBOY and PENTHOUSE than by bathing suit and underwear fashion styles promulgated first in France and Italy then imported to the heartland of America via the New York fashion industry. It is now okay for a woman to walk around in public with her ass showing. Compare the comic heroines of the forties with those of the present to see the shift. Look at the difference between the costumes of PHANTOM LADY and and of the contemporary characters used as cover figures by Dave Stevens and Bill Stout. Whether or not the morality of a period can be determined by the length of women's skirts and the amount of their skin that is showing is up to you to decide; in any case it is clear that the advertising industry has succeeded in associating bare skin with products like Special K and Slice,and subliminal sex and death images are still predominant in most of the products we see on national television everyday.

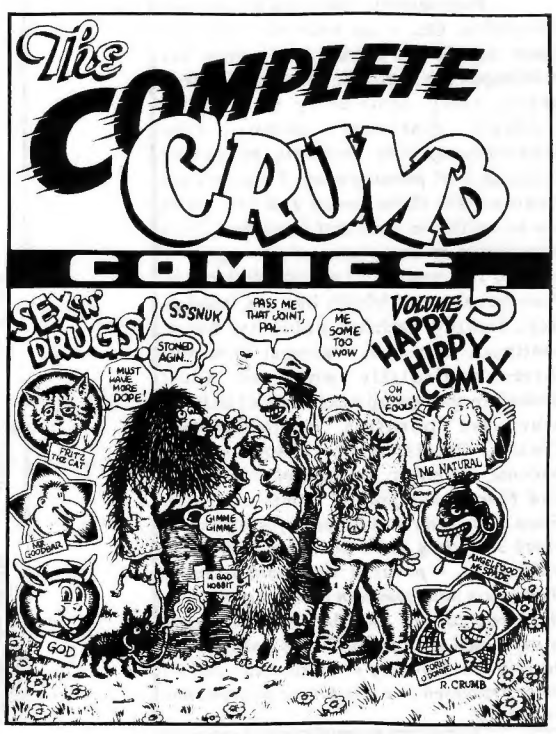
Language has changed significantly. What used to be dirty words are now so common that most of them are heard on HBO and other cable stations with no public complaints. Lenny Bruce was arrested many times circa 1965 for saying certain words onstage during his act. The same words are now heard on HBO in Eddie Murphy's special RAW, words common in thrillers like THE TERMINATOR, ROBOCOP, and LETHAL WEAPON. Most hypocritical are the media people and their guests who say *F-word* instead of fuck when everyone knows very well what they mean. They certainly aren't keeping anything from the kids. I hope they don't imagine a film like BEVERLY HILLS COP was made for adults. Language in the comic books has changed accordingly and it is the norm to hear certain characters say "Shit," etc., almost as often as the word is heard on rap tapes. Nor are the words limited to underground comix as they were circa 1972 when Richard Corben and Jaxon were putting contemporary jargon into the mouths of barbarians; in the eighties one found more than one superhero saying shit, damn, hell, and worse.

Talk shows have exploited every sexual aberration known to humankind. Guests through the eighties have been: transsexuals, transvestites, rapists, parents of murdered children, parents who have murdered their children, incest victims and offenders, child-abusers and abused children; indeed, the eighties was an era of sensationally exposed crime, a period when the criminal made great progress toward becoming a celebrity. Donahue blazed the trail and Oprah Winfrey, Geraldo Rivera, Joan Rivers, and Morton Downey, Jr., followed in his wake.

COMIX WAVE 85. March, 1990.

UNDERGROUND COMIX SHOW

A retrospective of underground comic art is being held at the San Francisco Museum of Cartoon Art, 665 Third Street, San Francisco, California. This show will continue through April and features original work by Spain, Bill Griffith, and many others.



Tolerance of sound levels have changed radically since the days of acid rock music when the decibal level began to creep upward. Today's teenager can ride around in a car equipped with a stereo system that makes it a mobile ghetto blaster. These boom box cars are not stopped for disturbing the peace, though just a few years ago such sound levels would have triggered a visit by the cops. I've often asked myself what this cacaphony means. Loud became a value in the eighties, demanded for its own sake. Softness was the threat, the sound of a parent or teacher saying *turn it down.* Silence was nothingness instead of tranquility. My mother sleeps with the radio or tv on all night as do many of the ladies in her condo. My aunt has her tv on all the time. Visitors come and go, but tv is forever, the endless company of manufactured celebrities. Television made the difference between capitalism and communism, because American television is able to create the illusion of plenty though a fifth of the population is disenfranchised, unemployed, living on the edge of poverty. America, with a trillion dollar national debt, can make the rest of the world think that everyone living here drives a beautiful sportscar and has a private swimming pool.

Pornography has become socially acceptable. Oh, I can hear the folks out there say it isn't true, but when sex videotapes are available for sale or rent in nearly every community in America through National chains like Wherehouse, this amounts to public acceptance of pornography. Pornstars are frequent talk show guests and I've yet to see an audience walk out in protest. This amounts to an acceptance of pornography as well. The movement against Violence in Pornography and Media has not fared as well, lacking national publicity, but it continues to mount a protest here and there, particularly when an adult bookstore springs up near a school or in an otherwise pornfree neighborhood. Clearly, the issue of censorship has become academic. *In spite of a bust here and there, underground comix and porn films and other public manifestations of overt sexuality have not been supressed; indeed, as I pointed out, underground themes are now common in what used to be children's comics like BATMAN. Outrage is expressed as a joke. It was nothing but parody on Downey's show and still is when expressed in a mock tone by Donahue or Rivera.*

COMIX PLUGOLA

A computer made mini from Ken Greene. LET A SNEER BE YOUR UMBRELLA. 50¢/stamp from him at 468 Anita Dr., Millbrae, CA 94030.

MONKS ON THE ROAD. 50¢/stamp from Mick Cusimano, POB 2565.

SHORTOONZ 3. 50¢/stamp from Dan Taylor, 1833 Guntle Rd., New Lebanon, OH 45345.

PAPER DREAMS 1. 75¢ pp from Paul Tumey and James Gill, HSC, 4841 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741-9631.

STUPID 1 is a nice little micromini from J. P. Crangle, Box 22, Syracuse, NY 13215. 50¢/stamp. Ask for his HOLIDAY FUNNIES. Same price.

CHICKEN SLACKS 4. DZ. $3.75 pp. Mary Fleener, 309 Oceanview Ave., Encinitas, CA 92024. Mary's going SLUTBURGER for Rip Off Press.

Sample copy of THE COMICIST for $1.45 from Rocket Graphics, 1112 Bellwood Dr., Loveland, OH 45140. Nice small press review zine.

SUCK BLOOD, a graphic novel re vampires. Info from POB 111305, Memphis, TN 38111-1305.

EL VIBORA 117 is $8 pp from J.M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.

We're getting over the Earthquake. Sorry to be late this time. Next mailing at the end of February. Plugs are still two copies.

HUP HUP HUP HUP HUP HUP

Crumb has a penchant for titillating the anal-sadistic misogynist reader as he simultaneously backlashes the feminist prude. In the third issue of his solo title, HUP, he leaps from infantilism across the abyss of existentialism and makes his way through a rather tedious anti-Trump diatribe to wind up deflating a bourgeois Flakey Foont's wimpy adulation of corrupt old Mr. Natural's flagrant misogyny. Crumb is to comics what Philip Roth was to popular literature in the sixties, the endless confessor, a reluctant celebrity who endlessly celebrates the cult of the self by drawing and redrawing his own aberrant sexual fantasies. In HUP, Crumb's nostalgia is personal, a 46-year-old father's passion for a young maid. Here is Robert Crumb, comicdom's best-known unknown, the man who has made a career out of making his privates public, keeping on keeping on. Is there any detail of Crumb's life that isn't known to the public? Isn't Crumb drifting into parody of parody as he re-draws sexual routines from twenty years past? I found his graphic explication du texte more boring than Sartre's pre-WW2 *La Nausée.* Seems Crumb is now taking seriously what he was making fun of back in FRITZ THE CAT. Is there a contemporary Crumb? Does he know that George Bush is President? Does he see Communism crumbling in Europe? Is he aware of neo-colonialism in Africa and South America? Has Crumb become an intellectual isolate?

To me existentialism, particularly the atheistic brand adopted by Sartre, was a philosophy which enabled a postwar world to distance itself from the horrors of Auschwitz and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I find any nostalgia for this mode curious.

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I got a phone call from this writer who said he was doing a piece on underground comix in relation to the current show in progress at the San Francisco Museum of Cartoon Art. He wanted to talk to me about the early days of underground comix and more or less pick my brain for stuff to use in his article. I said fine and when he called back I spent about half an hour answering his questions. His article came out with some of my answers quoted and others written into the text as though they were his own insights. he got the rest of the information from the program book.

One of his questions was whether or not I thought underground comix had made any significant contribution to popular culture. Well, I have never considered the concept of popular culture anything but an academic scam, basically, an excuse used by various English teachers trapped in the publish or perish circuit to rationalize writing about football, bubble gum cards, hula hoops and comic books. This writing then appears in clones of stodgy tomes like HUDSON REVIEW or AMERICAN LITERATURE. With this in mind, I said the contribution of ug comix to popular culture was trivial. Naturally, this appeared in the writer's article, structured like an insult to those artists who drew for various underground comix.

This pissed me off. Have I done this newsletter for 17 years in order to dump on the comix it has routinely promoted? Of course not. As J. D. Salinger said, *people never give anybody your message.* Outsiders never get it straight and they do nothing but spread ill will with the type of phony conflicts they stage to "spice" up their poorly researched drivel.

Your average YUP could care less who was or wasn't in ZAP COMIX and he sure as Perrier with a twist of lemon isn't going to go back and read 13 issues to find out. The only people who care about this lore are the cartoonists and their collector groupies and a handful of historians like myself who have kept track of who what where when and why for god knows what strange reason. It isn't money; that's certain. The last articles I did for another comix-oriented pub netted me 0. I even paid the postage.

When the local adzines do take a look at comix, they get out all the old clichés and seldom do a lick of research--*this in an area that has a dozen or more comic stores, all of them staffed by people who know comic books and have the reference books right there on their shelves.* Reporters don't bother to check the facts, because they don't respect the medium. They would never have a *who gives a shit?* attitide for a subject they respected. Well, this type of article is always insulting to the comics community in general and to the artists in particular.

A writer did a front page piece for a San Francisco hypezine on the comix show at the Cartoon Art Museum, and lo and behold I learned that Bill Griffith was a longtime contributor to ZAP COMIX! I'll bet that's news to a lot of people.

In the early seventies when there was still an underground community, none of the cartoonists would have considered writing or publishing anything in the EXAMINER; as a matter of fact, there were straight cartoonists who envied the freedom of the underground and dropped out to do their own strips. Underground newspapers and the comix that appeared in them were anti-establishment and certainly anti anything that establishment promoted as culture. The cartoonists in the collectives were saying Fuck popular culture and smash the state! The idea that an underground cartoonist would ever want to appear on the same page with shit like Garfield is still alien to most. But there were academic folks who wanted in on the action. Drop out on weekends. Take some acid. Hide the old Jag in the hills above Haight Street, dress down and cruise the I-Thou Coffeehouse or the Drogstore Cafe. Maybe get it on with one of those teenaged hippy girls in the bushes in Golden Gate Park. Free everything. Acid, love, music. Then write about it all later elevating it all to some crapola like the greening of America or the Decline and Fall of the Imperialism State. Sneak those hippies into the quarterlies as subcultural drop-outs and visionaries, as the New Indians. What a lot of dogshit. Pop culture. Underground comix were about unpopular culture if they had anything to do with culture. I remember the way Roger Brand used to go on about how much he hated what he considered "messagy comix."

You, dear reader, have to understand that the world of underground comix was not a unified one where everyone was tripping and jamming and all were one big happy family. There were numerous little cliques and factions just as there are now and there was a lot of jealousy and backbiting and a lot of hypocrisy. In reality, a lot of individualistic and often highly egocentric cartoonists were getting high and doing what they enjoyed doing, comic book stories. Now these stories, as most of you know since you have read them, are radically different. There is no one theme; there are hundreds.

So let's jump back to the question about the comix having some effect on popular culture, whatever the hell that is. Have movies and television been affected by underground comix in any way? Hey, isn't it really the other way around? Didn't underground comix parody the movies as MAD had been doing for quite some time before ZAP? What about something like Saturday Night Live? Underground Comix have anything to do with that? If you argue yes, you have your work cut out for you. Did John Belushi read the comix? In GOING TOO FAR, Tony Hendra went into detail about the influence of Harvey Kurtzman and MAD on SNL, but he also outlined the careers of people like Mort Sahl and Shelley Berman and Bill Cosby and Richard Pryor, all of whom had a more immediate effect on television humor than anything in the comix. I know Michael McClure was directly influenced by ZAP because he based some of the characters in GORF AND THE BLIND DYKE on those of Crumb and Wilson. GORF was done by the Magic Theater of Berkeley [later of San Francisco]. Question is, *is that popular culture or just culture?* I don't know. You decide. To me, Popular culture connotes stuff like hula hoops and skateboards and McDonald's mugs and the Super Bowl, things huge masses of people are into. Underground comix and little theater just do not qualify. I'll have to go with my definition of these as unpopular culture.

I think the contribution of the comix to the Super Bowl is trivial, but I could be wrong; hey, Charlie Brown's 40th birthday was celebrated during the half in New Orleans last Sunday [though he's actually 41, the first strip having appeared in TIP TOP COMICS in 1949]! We may see the day when Angelfood McSpade and Ruby the Dyke and Mr. Natural all have an orgy midfield when the 49ers win their 5th or 6th.

The kind of influence underground comix had came from the form more than the content. Crumb proved you could publish your own comic and the Eastern monopolies soon found competition springing up in the Bay Area and the Midwest. The content had little or no influence. The state was not smashed, the "Hip" community was driven out of the cities by increased police power. As for censorship, x-rated videos have had more impact that the comix ever did. You can rent DEEP THROAT at a video chain store in nearly any major city in America today, but try to find a copy of ZAP 4 or BIZARRE SEX 4. Politics? We've got a hip president, huh? Religion? A bit there. You would be surprised to know how many underground comix had religious themes, pro and con, from Frank Stack's NEW ADVENTURES OF JESUS to AUTHENTIC VISIONARY. Lots of cartoonists drifted into Eastern religions. Greg Irons had a Buddhist funeral in Berkeley back in 1983.

The underground label is just that, a label, and it is no more definitive than any other. The majority of people who contributed to the medium in the wake of ZAP would not be considered underground today anymore than most of them were in 1970. They drew comic stories and strips and the place to publish was in the open market on the West Coast, not the closed market represented by Marvel, DC, Charlton, etc. If you checked with many of these artists, you would find that they routinely submitted stuff to Marvel and MAD first, then gave it to some underground company when it was rejected. This was one of the good and the bad things about the entire business, good because lots of people got published who would not have had a chance pre-ZAP, bad because much of the work was poorly done and earned underground comix as a genre a negative reputation in the field at large. For many in the business, underground is still synonymous with amateur. It is easier to understand this today by looking through a collection of the comix published in the seventies. A great many of them are terrible. A few stand out as superb contributions to the field of modern comic art.

One of the things that has harmed the majority of the people who contributed to underground comix over the years is the star system. It is because of this pattern, inherent in capitalism, that a lot of superb artists are likely to be ignored by history. Ask the average person standing around in the comic store and you find a rare one who doesn't know the names of Crumb and Shelton. On the other hand, it is the rare reader and collector who knows of people like Tim Boxell and Peter Pontiac and Brent Boates. Hundreds of artists who identified with and drew for underground titles were simply cast aside while the media elevated one or two to recognition level so they could be exploited as stars. Crumb, has recognized and tried to deal with the negative aspects of this pattern in FRITZ THE STAR and subsequent self interviews.

You might be inclined to say *So what?* but consider the economic effect of this star system on working cartoonists. On yourself, since you are probably trapped in this system. Hey, in the sixties, it was considered selling out to draw for an establishment paper like the EXAMINER; in 1990, Bill Griffith is boasting about his strip appearing there. Why not? He's made a living with his craft and hundreds of others envy him, I am sure. But what does this imply? Is the EXAMINER now underground or is Zippy simply an overground character? Would you want to argue that underground comix were an influence on *popular culture* because Zippy has made the transition from Alfred Jarry to the EXAMINER?

I'd like to hear from some of you on the subject of comix and culture and if I get some good letters that are not too long, I'll print some next issue. -Clay Geerdes

That's the entire point of Dada, and of most of the other postwar art movements. Distortion, irrationality, and the unlikely juxtapositon of objects.

Charles Williford.
THE BURNT ORANGE HERESY
1971.

An artist doesn't put himself in a defensive position. And that's what happens to a speaker. A critic's supposed to speak. He welcomes questions, because his job is to explain what the artist does. The artist is untrained for this sort of thing, and all he does is weaken his position. Some painters go around the country on lecture tours today, carrying racks of slides of their work, and they're an embarassed, inarticulate lot. The money's hard to turn down, I suppose, but in the end they defeat themselves and negate their work. A creative artist has no place on the lecture platform, and that goes for poets and novelists, as well as painters.

The nonfiction writer is entitled to lecture. He started an argument on purpose when he wrote his book, and he has every right to defend it. But the painter's work says what it has to say, and the critic interprets it for those who can't read it.

Charles Williford.
THE BURNT ORANGE HERESY
1971.

COMIX PLUGOLA

You can order a copy of the Underground Comix show program book, ZAP TO ZIPPY, from the Cartoon Art Museum. 665 Third Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. Send $7.35 for the first copy, $6.25 for each additional copy. This is a nice book with updated commentary dealing with the way various underground artists think of the artwork today.

THE MUNDANE ADVENTURES OF DISHMAN continue in #8. 75¢ pp from John McLeod, POB 671, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1H GL3.

HEALTH 2 is $2 pp from David Tompkins, 207 Ave. B., Apt 2-A, NY, NY 10009.

FAN'TOONS 32 is $2 pp from Edd Vick, 5014-D Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Ed trades, prints LOCs, and publishes cartoons sent to him.

If you're looking for recent art by The Pizz and otherf newavers, check out YOUR FLESH #17. $3.50 from POB 2683, Loop Station, Mpls, MN 55402.

Dan Taylor's latest are SHORTOONZ 4 [50¢pp], and GALLERY 1 [50¢ pp]. 1833 Guntle Road, New Lebanon, OH 45345.

SNARF 14 should be on the shelf soon from Kitchen Sink.

EL VIBORA 118 is $8 pp from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelon, Spain. Charles Burns cover. Big Baby story. Practice your Spanish. Get a copy.

CEREBUS reprints continue from Aardvark-Vanaheim, Box 1674, Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2.

COMIX WAVE 87. May, 1990.
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COMIX PLUGOLA

Guy Colwell has followed up his successful DOLL trilogy with a fourth issue, one which explores sexual relationships between men and women. Basically, an illustrated monologue with a humorous subplot, DOLL 4 tries to explain why women seem to prefer men who are mean to them over gentler men who would prefer to be helpful to them. Whether or not Colwell succeeds in answering the question, I will leave to the reader to determine. Like Colwell, I have seen sado-masochistic relationships continue for years. One I remember well concerned a woman who married four times and each time she picked the same type of man. They were all big and athletic and two were police officers. All four abused her verbally and physically as she said in her divorce complaints against them. I knew this woman when she was studying psychology at the University of California and we used to have coffee together. She had actually taken up the study of psychology hoping to find out why she kept making the same mistake about men again and again. I listened to her talk about finding a sensitive, caring man who would treat her like a person, etc., then she asked me to photograph her wedding and I took the pictures of her and number four, a man who proceeded to kick her around just as the first three had. I'm not going to pull a Colwell and try to explain this to you.

EL VIBORA is celebrating it's tenth anniversary with a special issue. $10 from J. M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain. Adults only.

The complete *Acid Man Society* Series of Canadian artist Robert Pasternak (11 issues) is $5 pp. from Comix Wave.

Bob Vojtko is working on the JOHN DARLING strip with Tom Batiuk. One of the earliest Newavers, Bob is the creator of Fishtales, Low Budget Funnies, Coupons, and Playstocker. His most recent venture was a comic tabloid, the CARTUNE TRIBUNE out of his community in Lorain, Ohio.

DOLL is an android [gynoid?] and in her earlier adventures she was fought over by numerous men because she seemed the perfect woman, one who could be used sexually at any time without asking anything in return. DOLL had no vocal chords. The man who owned her could project anything onto her that he wished without fear of conflict. DOLL was perfect for the man who wanted sex and nothing else from a mate. The first three issues have been collected into a perfect bound book and you can get it at your local comic store. You have to be an adult, to be sure, because all of the sexual activity looks real even though DOLL is made out of latex. ❐

COLLECTORS AND CRITICS

In general, collectors can be divided into three categories. First, the rare patron-collectors who know what they want and order it from artists and artisans. This first category, in the historical past, helped to establish styles. Without the huge demand for portraits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, there would have been no great school of portrait painters.

Second, the middle-ground people, who buy what is fashionable, but collect fashionable art because they either like it without knowing why [it reflects their times is why] or have been taught to like it.

In the third category are the collectors for economic reasons. They buy and sell to make a profit. That is, in a tautoogical sense, they are collectors because they are collectors, but they enjoy the works of art they possess at the moment for their present and future value.

The one trait that all three types of collectors have in common is miserliness. They write small, seldom dotting "i's' or crossing "T's" and they are frequently costive. Once they own something, *anything*, they don't want to give it up.

The collector's role is almost as important to world culture as the critic's. Without collectors there would be precious little art produced in this world, and without critics, collectors would wonder what to collect. Even those few collectors who are knowledgeable about art will not go out on a limb without critical confirmation. Collectors and critics live within this uneasy symbiotic relationship. And artists--the poor bastards--who are caught in the middle, would starve to death without us.

Charles Williford.
THE BURNT ORANGE HERESY
1971.

PHOEBE & THE PIGEON PEOPLE, BY JAY LYNCH & JIM SIERGEY.

UNDERGROUND COMICS

Mick Cusimano

To debate about the influence of underground comics, first the term must be defined. For some, underground comics are described as art from the 60's emphasizing excesses of sex, drugs, violence, and radical politics. Sometimes these elements are there. But they can also be found in many modern mainstream comics. Most comics from the 60's as well as the rock music from the era may have very little to do with politics, the Vietnam war, etc. Amateur journalists and those who don't do much research are often guilty of taking the easy way out. If you can't understand something in artistic terms just label it as a reflection of the politics of the times. Listen to the Beatles, Hendrix, or the Stones' lyrics. The majority of what they write is personal imagery, poetry if you will. Not political ideology.

To illustrate what underground art is let me relate a tale of Salvador Dali and a fish. In the late 1930's Dali was commissioned to create a sculpture for the upcoming world's fair. Unveiling it for the committee, he caused pandemonium. He had created a woman's body with a fish's head. The members were irate. They banned his sculpture, citing that it would disturb the spectators. Dali argued, to no avail, that if it had been reversed, a woman's head on a fish's body [a mermaid], there would be no objection. the point being that the committee of judges, editors of magazines, art directors, television executives, etc., act as screens. They filter out and water down the art they commission before it gets to the public.

Underground comics or art skips the middleman, the censors, and ideally takes the product, raw as it may be, directly to the public.

This is how Underground Surrealist magazine was started. Five years ago, arriving in Boston, I met a couple of poets. I was asked to create cartoon posters for them. Having access to a copier, we printed thousands of posters each weekend and spent hours passing them out directly to passengers on Boston's subways. In addition we put many up on the walls of construction sites. Of course we got chased and yelled at occasionally but we got our message across straight to the people. That's what the First Amendment, freedom of speech is all about. It's the American way.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

The beauty contest is basically an advertising competition. Remember, it does not merely promote the bathing suits and make-up and the other products routinely advertised within and during the televised show, it also promotes an image and a lifestyle, one that is not shared by 99.99 % of the women who live and work in this country. Miss America is the monster who makes the lives of most women miserable, though few understand this or would openly admit it. She is the reason normal women feel insecure about their faces and their bodies and spend so much time trying to hide them with the products associated with Her Royal Emptiness. Miss America is the product. Looking at her, it is common to feel slightly hungry for some sugary breakfast cereal or soft drink or to develop a need to trade in the old family car for a new gas eater. We are so used to seeing that stereotyped body wearing that mask filled with vaselined teeth and glossy moist red lips that we forget what it does to us. Corporations buy Miss America and her spandex clones to associate with their products and lest you think this is purely a sexual sell, consider that the reverse is also true. Big Bottomline would rather have you eat and drink the crap he sells than have you enjoying any real sex. Think about this the next time you look at a cover photo of Miss America and get thirsty for a can of you know what.

COMICS AND CULTURE

Michael Stengl

Comics and culture? Culture being a curious term in this country with its hodge-podge of borrowed and imitated values. I say nay. Reflect culture, yes, [*Love and Rockets* /Mexican and Mexican-American lifestyles]; create an awareness or inform--yes, in the best of the medium; influence CULTURE? No, that being decided more by geography, religion [or lack of], education and economy. Big, big things. Advertising and TV have moved into a position of influence literally buying their way into our lives. Technology changes a culture but that's education and economy again. There may be, however, similar interests or lifestyles among cartoonists themselves, their friends and fans which might be a mini culture unto itself, but that's not popular culture, is it?

I don't know about HOMO PATROL by K. L. and Tom Roberts. They say it's about *bigotry in any form and the misunderstandings and horror that can arise from it.* You can get a copy for $4 pp from Tom, 333 S. East Avenue, #209, Oak Park, IL 60302, and make your own decision. To me, it was wordy and messagy, comparable to Colwell's fourth DOLL.

August 2-5, 1990

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San Diego Comic Con, P.O. Box 17488
San Diego, CA 92117, (619) 491-2089

Clifford Neal sent me a clipping about a teacher who showed MYSTIC PIZZA in her 7th grade class on filmmaking. The movie was made in Mystic, where Neal lives, and a lot of people from that community were in the film. Well, the teacher got the big chew from some parents who didn't like their kids seeing the movie. Hey, it had words like Fuck and Asshole i it and those teenagers have never heard those words, not in a town filled with fishermen and sailors and BOYS. It had some sex scenes, too, and, of course, there is nothing like that on TV and Mystic kids are kept pure and innocent until they are 21 and married to Mr. Right. People this naive are amazing, aren't they? They're like those folks who say things on the talk shows and think their families and friends aren't going to hear them in an era of VCRs. If I was a kid growing up in a small coastal town and there was a movie made about my town, how could I miss seeing that movie? If my parents said I couldn't see it, what would I do? I'd find a pal with a vcr and see the video some afternoon at his place, which I am sure most of the kids around Mystic have done by now. ***Those parents should have thanked that teacher for showing that film in a controlled situation where the ideas in it could be discussed.***

I didn't care for MYSTIC PIZZA, but I enjoy seeing the footage of Mystic, Connecticut, since Cliff Neal* has been a longtime member of COMIX WAVE. I suspect local people had the same reaction to the movie as I had to THE GRADUATE. We hooted when we saw Benjamin driving toward Berkeley on the Oakland Bay Bridge only to wind up at Stanford which is some 50 miles in the opposite direction.

*Clifford Neal is the editor of DR. WIRTHAM'S COMIX AND STORIES.

COMIX WAVE 88. June, 1990.
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COMIX PLUGOLA

The twelfth issue of Robert Pasternak's ACID MAN SOCIETY is available from CW for 50¢/stamp.

JAKA'S STORY continues in Dave Sim's CEREBUS 16 at your local comic book store.

Scott Shaw is doing his Oddball Comic slide show at the Aztec Center of San Diego State U on March 31 at 7:30. Call 544-9555 for info. Scott's collection contains a lot of overground stuff that was much weirder than anything that appeared in the underground comix.

If you haven't gotten a copy of Robert Williams' VISUAL ADDICTION, you've missed seeing some of the most bizarre fantasy paintings since the golden age of Dali. $22.50 pp from Last Gasp, 2180 Bryant Street. San Francisco, CA 94110. For $2, you can get Last Gasp's latest catalog. The infamous Cherry Poptart is on the cover to promote the collection of Cherry's adventures due out later this year.

Don't miss REAL LIFE, a collection of graphic stores by Mark Zingarelli. Tightly written realistic stories.

MADNESS BY MAIL 3 is $1.75 pp from Acid Pit Press, 26 Pleasant Ave., Barre, MA 01005. DZ. Trades ads for submissions.

Michael Stengl has MUNDANE STORIES, a new mini, and ANIMALS OF TRINIDAD [with John Dooley], a DZ. Both for $4 pp. P. O. Box 568, Trinidad, CA 95570. * MONKS ON THE ROAD is 50¢/stamp from Mick Cusimano, POB 2565, Harvard Square Station, Cambridge, MA 02238.*

SPICY RETURNS

In November of 1934, readers of SPICY DETECTIVE got a little surprise bonus with the first appearance of Adolphe Barreaux' SALLY THE SLEUTH. Sally would appear in four page cartoon adventures for nearly a decade before giving in to censorship pressures and putting on the towel. The formula in the Sally stories was a simple one. Sally, like Nancy Drew, would stumble upon a crime in progress, get involved, lose her clothes somewhere along the way, and finish up routing the villains, sometimes with official detective help, but more often on her lonesome. Sally was delicately drawn in this pre-pubic decade when the physical contact in the script was limited to out of bed rough and tumble. Though not primarily a bondage strip, Sally was often captured or kidnapped and tied up until rescued. In some cases, she was whipped and more than once she got into hair-pulling and scratching matches with female villains. This was called cat fighting at the time. Sally reappeared in PRIVATE DETECTIVE in 1950 and interest in her revived off and on during the underground comix period in the seventies. The Sally formula was used by Harvey Kurtzman in LITTLE ANNIE FANNY. A selection of her adventures appears in the new SPICY TALES COLLECTION edited by Tom Mason and available from Malibu Graphics [1355 Lawrence Drive #212, Newbury Park, CA 91320, $9.95 plus $2 postage and handling]. 136 pp, perfect bound.

JIM RYAN ON COMIX CULTURE

You [referring to Clay Geerdes to whom this letter was addressed] point out that the media register the impact of a genre by elevating some of its practitioners to star status, and you are [rightly] disappointed that only Crumb and Shelton became famous, with dozens of other fine artists being overlooked. But if you avoid the media-fostered assumption that stars must be produced for a genre to have had success or impact, the comix phen-omenon makes more sense.

And we have to forget distinctions of high culture and low culture--a distinction created and maintained by those who make money peddling high culture to insecure snobs. Comix are a nonelectronic, black and white medium, so we cannot expect them to have more than a subtle impact. We have to think of their importance qualitatively, not quantitatively. They may not have influenced a large proportion of the population, but they influenced some people profoundly.

It is easy to overlook that if you regard comix primarily as a phenomenon inextricably associated with the Bay Area scene of 20 years ago. Believe me, that scene meant very little to thousands of readers across the country, and I suspect that those are the people who bought most of the comix, by mail or in local shops. To lots of individuals around the country, comix were a taste of freedom, a shot of creativity, a lot of laughs and a minor rebellion. What was going on in California was only of ancillary interst to these folks. They were interested in the comix themselves, and the comix provided a little bit of alternative cultural input that helped such people to survive and form destandardized outlooks.

UNDERGROUND COMIX AGAIN

As I have written elsewhere, there were several major focal points for the underground comix of the early seventies, the Bay Area, New York, and Wisconsin, but the comix that got into print in those areas were drawn by people from different places. After all, the five men who formed Rip Off Press back in 1969 were all Texans, not Californians, and what is reflected in the stories about the Freak Brothers has more to do with Texas mores and folklore than with anything peculiar to the Bay Area. Had it not been for a few men who were willing to take on the *business* of comix, the whole scene would be long forgotten and most of the art still in sketchbooks or on the walls of private rooms never to be seen by the public. Those who were critical in getting the books out, advertising and distributing them, were men like Don Schenkor and Bob Rita of The Print Mint, Ron Turner of Last Gasp, Gary Arlington who founded the San Francisco Comic Book Company out of his store in the Mission district, and Denis Kitchen who held Krupp Comic Works together. While Ron Turner published IT AIN'T ME BABE COMIX and the early issues of WIMMEN'S COMIX, one exclusively feminist company run by women was Nannygoat Productions, started by Joyce Farmer and Lyn Chevli back in 1973.

It's always easier to focus on a single star, particularly if you are a writer, but in truth there is no such animal. No one does it all alone. A few people are more important than others, because it is hard to think about who might replace them. No art, no comic book, but no publisher, no comic book either. True, the artist could publish his own book, but in most cases this has not worked out.

If you are standing in a store reading a comic book, that book passed through a lot of hands before it got to yours. Someone had to shoot that art, clean up the negatives and paste them up, run the guts on a Webb press, do the color separations on the cover, run those to a printer, get the covers printed, get guts and covers back together, get all of that to a bindery where it could be collated and stapled, pick up the finished books, load and unload them, organize and ship them out to retailers and mail order customers--there were hundreds of people involved in getting that comic book into your hands. We're talking about a team effort, not something one person can do alone, yet only one person is going to get the credit for that book in the minds of most of you and that's the artist. You take the rest of the work for granted.

For most people there is a marriage between form and content. Usually, when something is really satisfying, the form doesn't show. You are only aware of the content; indeed, when you do become aware of the form, this is often upsetting. We don't expect to see a light technician on the set of DALLAS or the shadow of a boom in a period Western. Underground artists often played with the form, deliberately calling the reader's attention to the fact that he was reading a comic book. With comix, we have a strange problem. We are in a form that is rejected as trivial by the mass readership, hence any content within that form is negated, be it a discussion of atomic energy and its effects on the environment or the influence of governmental agencies on the economic behavior of the population. Even within the comics community, there is a hierarchy of form and content. If something appears in a minicomic or digestzine or simply a little pamphlet of some kind, it lacks the status it would have if it appeared in a 32 page B/w book with a glossy cover. That comic lacks the status it would have if it were printed entirely in color and the color comics lack the status they would have if they had DC or some other mainstream logo stamped on the cover. We're talking strictly about form here, because a Batman story could appear in a digestzine as well as in the various color comics and graphic albums currently on sale; indeed, one of the ways to commercial success is for the content to appear in as many forms as possible. Last year saw Batman and his paraphenalia on everything from towels to toilet tissue and this year the same is due to happen with Eastman and Laird's TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES.

That's enough for now. COMIX WAVE is interested in hearing your opinion about comix and popular culture. If you have a Mac, set your letter in this size column and keep it short enough to print. I use New Century Schoolbook font 12. I'm just not going to typeset any long letters, guys, sorry.

People who send me two copies of their zines in payment for a plug, I will run your cover on a space available basis if you send me a small two or three inch stat. I don't run hardcore sex stuff in the newsletter, so if that's your trip, sorry. C. G.

COMIX PLUGOLA

WHAT PRICE FEMINISM?

Ms. MAGAZINE bellied up last November, but Gloria Steinem's latest plan is to revive the magazine sans ads. Six 100 page issues a year for $40. Good luck, Gloria.

Now available from Not Available [doncha love it?] Comics--THE DEATH OF ANTISOCIALMAN, Chapter One. 50¢/stamp. 3867 Bristow, Detroit, MI 48212. Story by Walt Lockley and art by Matt Feazell.

LOT LIZARD

A lot lizard is a prostitute who lures a truck driver into a truck stop and sells him sex. The lot lizzies advertise on their CB radios. I learn things like this from reading Ann Landers.

HAMBURGEROLOGY?

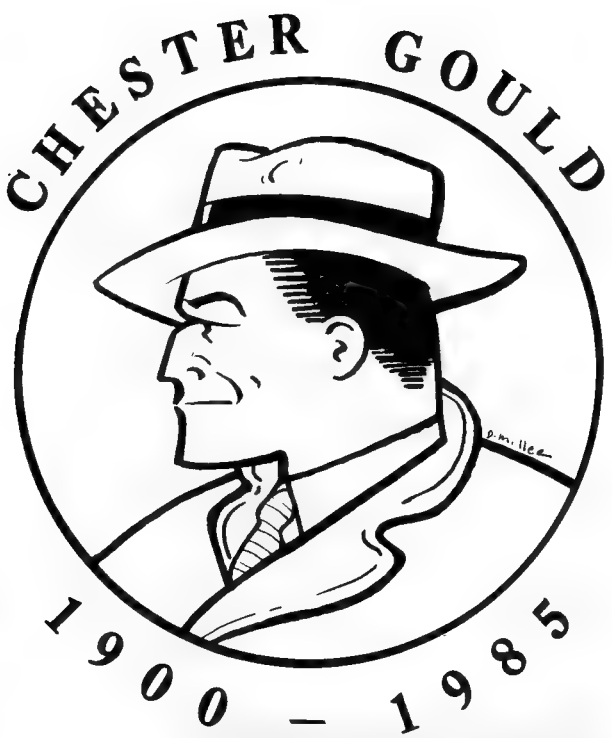
Harper's Index noted that the 4 managers of the Moscow McDonald's attended the Canadian Institute of Hamburgerology for 9 months.

RAGTIME

So what would happen if suddenly, magically, men could menstruate and women could not? Men would brag about how long and how much. Street guys would invent slang ('He's a three pad man") and give each other high fives on the corner with some exchange like, 'Man, you lookin' good!' 'Yeah, man, I'm on the rag!"

Gloria Steinem

Quoted in the ANDERSON VALLEY ADVERTISER, America's only truly underground newspaper. 3/14/90



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SHOULD COMIC CHARACTERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO DIE?

Comic strips have a natural lifetime, and any cartoonist ought to be able to quit or retire without fear that his syndicate will hire some hack illustrator to keep the work doing. It's time syndicates stopped maiming their comic strips by passing them on to official plagiarists. It's also time that the would-be successors of comic strips had more respect for their own talents and for the work of those who created something original. If some-one wants to be a cartoonist, let's see him develop his own strip instead of taking over the duties of someone else's. We've got too many comic strip corpses being propped up and passed for living by new cartoonists who ought to be doing something of their own. If a cartoonist isn't good enough to make it on his own work, he had no business being in the newspaper.

Bill Watterson
from a speech given at Ohio State
reprinted in WITTY WORLD 8.

VIOLENT TURTLES IN TOWN

The National Coalition on Television Violence counted 194 separate violent acts in the big screen version of Eastman and Laird's TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES which dominated the mall scene in April and May of 1990. The authors will have to answer to this on Connie Chung's show in May. Question is whether or not fantasy violence is the same as real violence and what has caused the phenomenal success of TMNT? I know the real fans of this series are little kids. My friend, Clara, helps out at a day care center in Albany, California, and she saw one little five year old boy drawing not only each of the turtles, but all of the weaponry, and he could spell their names just as I could spell the names of the Three Musketeers when I was his age.

Topps has come out with the TMNT bubble gum card series and I saw these cards for sale at twice the price in a local comic book store. That's not ethical, guys. Those cards just came out and you're ripping off little kids for two bits. Knock it off!

DICK TRACY

Dick Tracy sprang from the pen of Chester Gould in 1931 when Prohibition was still the law of the land and gangsters like Al Capone and Bugsy Siegel shot up the landscape at will. At first, Gould was inspired by newspaper reports of crimes, but soon gangster movies like THE PUBLIC ENEMY (1931), LITTLE CAESAR, and SCARFACE would make their mark on the tone and texture of his comic strip. Gould's grotesque villains came from the nether world of pulp magazines like BLACK MASK and DETECTIVE BOOK. They were typified by a specific physical characteristic like the flat head of Flattop, the tiny face of Little Face, the wrinkles of Prune Face, and the acrid odor of B. O. Plenty. Dick started his career in law enforcement as Plainclothes Tracy. Gould knew that a man in uniform was limited and he wanted Dick to be a more flexible detective. That's why he invented the electronic gadgets that gave Tracy the same edge Doc Savage had. With his two-way wrist radio Dick could contact his sidekick Pat Patton seconds after he spotted the Mole. Later on the radio was upgraded to a wrist television, and in 1986, with Rick Fletcher illustrating the scripts of Max Allan Collins, Dick got his wrist computer.

Gould, a college man, kept up with the advances of contemporary science and wrote the new technology into his strip, but what made the strip successful from day one was his suspenseful plotting.

The daily comic strips established continuity for the reader in that pre-television period and when I was growing up in the thirties, anyone you talked to knew what was happening to Dick Tracy and Little Orphan Annie and a lot of other popular characters. The adventure strips imitated the silent serials of the twenties and the cliffhanger format was well established by the time Gould hit pay dirt with his mid-American version of Sherlock Holmes. Millions of people followed DICK TRACY in the thirties and since syndicated cartoonists got a royalty per strip per paper, Gould was a rich cartoonist by the close of the decade. I first heard the strip read by my dad then by Uncle Somebody who read the funnies over the radio when I was four or five years old; I was still following it in the fifties when I joined the Navy.

Chester Gould was born November 20, 1900, the son of Alice Miller and Gilbert R. Gould. He grew up in Pawnee, Oklahoma, and moved to Chicago on September 1, 1921, to begin his career as a cartoonist. Gould got a degree in Marketing from Northwestern. He married Edna Gauger in 1926 and by 1935 he had established his home in Woodstock, Illinois. He drew DICK TRACY for 46 years. The first strip appeared in the Detroit MIRROR on October 4, 1931. Gould retired in December of 1977 and passed the strip along to a new writer/artist team. He died in May of 1985.

Mutual put Dick Tracy on a radio show in 1935. By 1938, you could hear the adventures of Dick and Tess Trueheart, Junior Tracy, Pat Patton, and Chief Brandon everyday at 5 pm. In 1937, Dick Tracy was in the movies. Ralph Byrd starred in the four Republic serials: DICK TRACY, DICK TRACY RETURNS, DICK TRACY'S G-MEN, AND DICK TRACY VS. CRIME, INC. They were stiff but fun. In the last one, Dick fought an invisible villain called The Ghost. Tess was dropped from the serial and Dick's girl friend Gwen was played by Kay Hughes. Each chapter of a serial had a cliffhanger which left the hero or someone close to him in jeopardy. I remember Byrd trapped in an elevator that was filling up with water. Hey, we had to wait until the next Friday, *a whole week*, to see whether or not Dick drowned in that damned elevator while the villain was getting away. Well, of course, Dick was going to get out somehow. How could they continue the show with a dead detective? But the kid in me never thought that way. I spent part of the week truly concerned about the fate of Tracy and I was always relieved when he escaped. Onscreen, Dick fought mystery rays and wingless airships. In DICK TRACY'S G-MEN, Gwen was played by Phyllis Isley who later became a top actress named Jennifer Jones. The Tracy serials ran to sixty episodes, the longest since the silent days of Pearl White. Serials were revived in the mid-seventies with STAR WARS and RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK and the form has contributed to the success of a number of new film companies. It was only fitting that Disney turn Dick Tracy into a mega-serial. Morgan Conway played Tracy in the first movie about the character [RKO, 1945], but Ralph Byrd returned for the three sequels, DICK TRACY MEETS CUEBALL, DICK TRACY MEETS GRUESOME, and DICK TRACY'S DILEMMA. Byrd was cast in the first television series [1950-5l], but he died in 1952 and the series was cancelled.

Dick was often parodied. A square-jawed, no-nonsense detective who never had his hat knocked off or his black suit wrinkled was too good a target to pass up and when Al Capp asked Gould if he could parody Dick in *L'il Abner*, Gould said, sure, go ahead. So it was that Fearless Fosdick entered Dogpatch. L'il Abner Yokum read Fearless Fosdick every day and became one of the invulnerable detective's most ardent fans. Abner went so far as joining the local Fosdick Fan Club and swearing an oath to do everything his hero did. What everyone was worrying about in those days was whether Abner would ever marry Daisy Mae and when Abner joined the Fosdick Fan Club, the fans figured they were safe, because everyone knew Fosdick would *never ever* marry Prudence

Pimpleton. ***But he did!*** Only ***his*** marriage to the square-jawed spinster took place in a dream and Abner Yokum found himself married ***for real!*** Fosdick was an amazing character, one who went on fighting crime even after he was shot full of holes like a swiss cheese. The parody went on for years with Chester Gould's permission. Capp always wanted Gould to reciprocate, to play the game with him and parody L'il Abner in DICK TRACY, but Gould never did. His own stories were too close to parody. Who but Gould would have Breathless Mahoney stab a woman in the back with a pair of garden shears when she could have knocked the woman out easily? The violence in DICK TRACY was always overdone, a point Capp emphasized well in FEARLESS FOSDICK.

In THE GREAT PIGGY BANK ROBBERY, animator Bob Clampett turned Daffy Duck into Duck Twacy, who was menaced by colorful villains like Neon Noodle. MAD MAGAZINE took on Tracy several times and Bill Elder turned him into *Tick Dacey* in his PANIC parody in 1954.

Dick Tracy managed to survive all of the social changes that killed off his peers, guys like Moon Mullins, Sparky Watts, Smilin' Jack, The Gumps and Abbie and Slats. Space characters like Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers have been revived periodically, but they no longer have any continuity. Dick Tracy is still in the funny papers in 1990. 59 years of continuity.

Over the years Chester Gould had numerous assistants, including Dick Moores and Russell Stamm, but most of the time he had a staff of at least four assistants. His brother Ray did the lettering, pencilled and inked back-grounds and minor figures, and wrote and drew the CRIMESTOPPERS TEXTBOOK. He also drew the Autolite ads many attributed to Gould.

When Gould decided to retire in 1977, he turned the strip over to Rick Fletcher and Max Allan Collins. The current strip is written by Collins and drawn by Dick Locher, an editorial cartoonist who took over when Rick Fletcher died suddenly.

Locher, according to Max [See Guest Editorial in Comic Buyer's Guide 851, March 9, 1990, p. 4.], was the first assistant of Gould's to do extensive pencilling and inking on the strip. Readers will be pleased to know that a selection of stories from the past and present will appear in St. Martin's DICK TRACY CASEBOOK out later this summer.

On the big screen in the wake of the Salkind Superman series and Batman, DICK TRACY stars Warren Beatty as Dick, Madonna as Breathless Mahoney, and Dustin Hoffman as Mumbles.

-CLAY GEERDES

There are two collections of Dick Tracy stories: THE CELEBRATED CASES OF DICK TRACY: 1931-1951. New York Bonanza Books, 1970. and DICK TRACY, AMERICA'S MOST FAMOUS DETECTIVE: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CHESTER GOULD'S IMMORTAL SLEUTH. New Jersey: Secaucus Press, 1987. The DICK TRACY comic strip was reprinted routinely in SUPER COMICS in the forties and there are quite a few of the older DICK TRACY comic books available in comic book stores around the country.

Re the graphic novel movie tie-ins from Disney, Jean Gould O'Connell send this letter to CBG 851: ***"I would like your solid Dick Tracy/Chester Gould fans to know how upset my family and I are with Disney's choice of artwork for the Dick Tracy Graphic Novels that are preceding the Dick Tracy movie. I recently sent a letter to Disney stating that I feel this artwork is a complete desecration of my father's work. Though I am helpless to do anything, I want fans to know my feelings. It is a great contradiction to my father's work."***

COMIX PLUGOLA

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JAKA'S STORY continues in Dave Sim's CEREBUS 17 at your local comic book store.

FIRE SALE is a nice pot pourri by many of the surviving underground cartoonists. Rip Off Press put this one together as a benefit comic for Larry Todd who tells the story of the fire that destroyed his place in Willits. Gruesome stuff. We hope Larry has recuperated from his ordeal. Rip Off Press is now located in Auburn, Calif. 95604. POB 4686. Send a buck for their catalog.

John Wade III is doing a comedy sheet, a sample of which you received with this mailing of CW. If you would like to write to him or contribute, he lives at 4818 Gaywood Drive, Fort Wayne, IND 46806.

Last Gasp, 2180 Bryant Street, San Francisco, CA 94110. $2 gets you Last Gasp's latest catalog. The infamous Cherry Poptart is on the cover to promote the collection of Cherry's adventures due out later this year. The trucker's favorite, CHERRY is in her 9th issue.

ALL COVER COMICS is 50¢/stamp from Randy Paske, 4841 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741-9631. Note to all concerned, two other people have used this idea and title. I see a lot of duplication these days in F/X and elsewhere. This leads to mix-ups later on when people order stuff.

EL VIBORA 122 has a nice cover by Gilbert Shelton. This mag routinely reprints the work of Crumb and Charles Burns in Spanish. $8 pp from J. M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain. 08003. Adults only.

COMIX PLUGOLA

NORMAL LIFE is just another sitcom about a boring suburban white family where the laugh track does all the laughing. I hate laugh tracks almost as much as I hate dust jacket hype. Could there be anything worse than AMERICA'S SHITTIEST VIDEOS? They ought to show the moments after, parents sitting with their kids in intensive care at the hospital, guys with their legs in casts. When one local columnist called this show organized child abuse, he had it pegged. With a few terminally cute exceptions, it's a show for parents who secretly want to off their kids. It's got to be the stupidest concept I've seen this year with a lot of people sitting in a studio clapping like clods when there is nothing live to clap about. Talk about an insult to the public. Talk about assholism for the masses.

If I haven't said how much I hate that Disney restyling of Dick Tracy, consider it said. I was always a fan of Chester Gould and agree with his family that the artwork in BAY CITY BLUES is beyond redemption.

When Connie Chung tried to squeeze Marlon Brando into the mold, she more than met her match as he ignored her inane questions and said what he wanted to say to the public while the tape was rolling. Warren Beatty did just the opposite when Barbara Walters cornered him on the set of Dick Tracy for that noninterview in March. Instead of ignoring her and having his say, he just sat there like a clod and said nothing. By his smile, you could tell he held Walters in little esteem, but what did the prime time listener get out of that interchange? Well, we know Warren dug Dick Tracy when he was a kid and the movie looks like a lot of latex fun.

Explain this one to me. People are stepping over the homeless and poor in San Francisco to pay as much as $55 to sit and watch the poor and homeless onstage in LES MISERABLES. Probably the same people who didn't see enough hippies and love children on the streets in 1969 so they paid to see HAIR.

FREE ICE CREAM and YOUR DIRTY LIL' COMIC 3 are 50¢/stamp each from Randy H. Crawford, 911 Park St. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504-6241. BIG SISTER 2 is $1/stamp. I LOVE CAT-GIRLS, TOO is $1/stamp. PLAIN BROWN WRAPPER SPECIAL NUMBER THREE is $1.69/stamp. Adults only. You should remember to send an age statement with all orders for underground or newave comix.

CONTINUUM is 50¢ pp from Concrete Caverns Graphix, 70-A Greenwich Ave., NY, NY 10011. MEAN STREETS 3 from the same address.

REAL SCREAM COMICS 17 [DZ] is $2 from Mike Culpepper, 808 Stanley St., Nelson, B. C. V1L 1N7.

ROAD SALT 1 is $1.50 pp from J. P. Crangle, POB 22, Syracuse, N Y 13215-0022. Send him an extra buck and beg for his Cartoon Tips. Good stuff for beginners. Crangle teaches a cartooning class.

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NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS

The bracketed number on your mailing list is the number of your last issue. I have converted the years to number of issues and will no longer put the month on my newsletter. Those who have subscribed for this year should renew at No. 94 to insure continuity. -Clay Geerdes

THE NEW DISNEY COMICS

For the first time, Disney has taken over the publication of the comic books that have been coming out since 1941 [MICKEY MOUSE was in magazine format from 1935-41], and the first eight titles appeared on sale in early April of this year. WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES 548 is likely to be a hot collector's item so race out and buy your dozen. The artwork, mostly by Spanish artists who have worked in animation, is very meticulous and in that premiere Donald Duck story, *Home is the Hero*, the style of Carl Barks has been imitated down to the eyeball. Only Donald and his nephews appear in the story, basically a Junior Woodchucks tale, and it is clear that Disney intends to retain the tradition Barks has built into the strip over the years.

Mickey Mouse on the other hand raises a lot of questions. In the pilot story by Michael T. Gilbert, Mickey and Minnie are on vacation in Venice. The characters are clearly meant to be a married couple. Minnie owns an antique shop.

What? What? If Mickey and Minnie are married, they must have sex, right? But didn't Disney sue the Air Pirates back in 1971 for "tarnishing the Disney image" by depicting the Iwerks-styled mice doing *IT* ? Is Disney now suggesting it's okay to *imply* that Mickey and Minnie have sex, but not to just go ahead and *show* what is certainly more than a common activity among mice? Joel Chandler Harris' Brer Rabbit was married to Ol' Molly Har who was conspicuously missing from Disney's SONG OF THE SOUTH as well as the subsequent comic book stories.

Gee, if you're going to grossly distort nature by presenting children with giant mice wearing clothes and keeping tiny kittens as pets, seems you've already put a good dent in their reality perception.

Gilbert's is a standard adventure plot with behavioral standards likely to be rejected by many contemporary readers, certainly those who are trying to alter the sex roles of their children. Instead of an enlightened woman of the nineties, Minnie is the same timid little character she was in 1926. If anything happens, she waits for her *hero* Mickey to take care of it, to rescue her. This reactionary view of passive feminity is out of phase with today's woman. Who is the intended reader here? I don't know of any married children and the Disney comics are promoted as little kid comics, but it appears from this new run of Mickey Mouse that Disney has an older reader in mind; if this is not so, let me be one of the first to reject the incoherent values presented in this comic.

Minnie Mouse entered the Disney world in 1928 when she was lifted off the landing by a crane hooked through her panties and dropped on the deck of a steamboat. Here we are 62 years later and she's walking around in a gondola in a pair of pink high heels. Back in *Steamboat Willie* Mickey was wearing a pair of shorts; today he's wearing sensible clothes.

I would like to see the relationship between Mickey and Minnie made clear to the child reader. If Minnie is already married to Mickey in this Phantom Gondolier story, then how can the Phantom expect to take her away to become his bride? Is a child expected to understand something like that? This Italian manifestation of Pan is evil and his touch can kill flowers. He is presented as a dark, terrifying adult figure, and he is not explained. Unlike The Phantom Blot in the original Mickey adventure, this Phantom does not turn out to be kindly old Walt Disney in disguise. We are not even sure what kind of animal he is, though the Gondolier appears to be a walrus. I would rate this comic GP and wouldn't buy it for a child under 12. The same goes for ROGER RABBIT which employs a concept far too kinky for children--a rabbit married to a ridiculous caricature of a woman like Jessica? Give me a break. I don't know. Maybe it's me. But can you imagine that stupid Roger Rabbit in bed with Jessica? Gruesome thought, huh? Roger's silliness doesn't work for me any better in the comic than it did in the film. In the comic he even talks to his mailbox! Jessica is a negative stereotype of woman and I am opposed to her inclusion in a comic aimed at little kids. Older readers may choose to see her as a parody of the film noir movie star, but I see her as another example of male movie/tv mogul backlash against the women's movement. The parallels between Toon Town and the human world present numerous plot possibilities and it isn't necessary to degrade women in order to explore them.

The revival of UNCLE SCROOGE is good stuff. It even contains a more enlightened view of an Indian tribe. So does the first issue of GOOFY ADVENTURES. I guess what I would like to see in all of these comics is a more enlightened attitude toward women and a lot more care given to the behavior being taught. These comics can and should be a positive force in teaching the value of community solidarity. I would like to see less nostalgia and more confrontation with the kind of reality that is evolving in our country. I'm tired of seeing other peoples depicted as minorities or simply ignored, and the old small town European immigrant farmer ethos that informed early Disney just doesn't wash in 1990. People from all over the world, Africa, Asia, Central and South America, now share this country and it is not only unrealistic but grossly unfair to present in a nationally distributed line of comic books what is basically a rural white anglo-saxon protestant fantasy world as being the norm for all who live here. America has always been a melting pot, assimilating people from all parts of the world and the comics world ought to reflect this. Let me tell you, behind the scenes in the comic companies, there are thousands of Latino and Asian in-betweeners and inkers. It must be a strange experience for many of these workers to spend their days drawing fantasies which seldom reflect or fulfill their own needs.

I am glad Disney has taken control of the comic books. I think the art in the new line is superb. My only fear is that the books will be turned into the wrong kind of propaganda and used to program kids with negative values toward women and other people while selling their parents an endless succession of products. Since the characters *are* products, there is no reason to advertise products in the magazines, but I am afraid this type of overkill has become *de rigeuer* in 1990.

Send a buck to Green Island, 5700 El Dorado, Apt. A, El Cerrito, CA 94530, and ask for the DZ, MEXICAN RADIO. I found it at Comic Relief in Berkeley.

JAKA'S STORY continues in CEREBUS 131. Aardvark-Vanaheim has reprinted CEREBUS 31 and 32. POB 1674, Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. N2G 4R2.

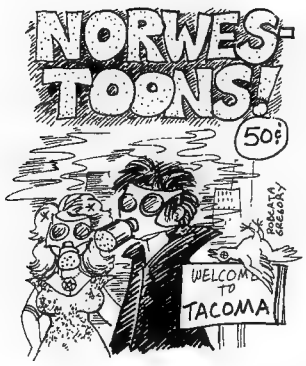
COMIX PLUGOLA

EL VIBORA 123 has a Crumb cover and is $8 pp from J. M. Berengeuer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.

BIG SISTER 3 is $1 pp from Victor Gates, 552 Lancelot Dr. North Salt Lake, Utah 84054. Art by Randy H. Crawford.

MU PRESS

5014-D Roosevelt Way N. E.,
Seattle, WA 98105,
has the following new comics for sale:
MORTY THE DOG, VOLUME ONE. $4.75 pp.
THE DESERT PEACH. Donna barr's latest. All four issues $10 pp.
Dresden and Getsu-Shin Moss' RHAT. $2.75 pp.
NORWESTOONS
drawn at the Tacoma Sci-Fi Con, 50¢/st.



COMICS FOR THE DISABLED

Helpless Anger Productions' 1988 comic book entitled *Anti-Social for the Disabled* is currently being used as required reading material for a college course at the Illinois Institute of Technology. The book includes jokes and stories written by disability activists Mike Ervin and Susan Nussbaum, with artwork by Helpless Anger cartoonist Tom Roberts, himself a wheelchair user. Ms. Nussbaum's satirical play on a disabled theme, *STARING BACK*, produced in Chicago in 1985, was an inspiration for producing the comic. For information, write 333 S. East Ave., #209, Oak Park, IL 60302.

ARCHIE REVISITED

Back in the sixties--get out your old guitar and play along--ARCHIE completely lost touch. Various underground artists did the forties Montana characters in and got the usual threats from the company. Rick Griffin included Archie's face among lots of other images of trademarks and when that face appeared in a Print Mint comic, a lawsuit was threatened. Routine. MAD got a threat in the early fifties after the STARCHIE parody, but all was settled when Harvey Kurtzman promised to leave Archie alone in the future. Larry Welz' CHERRY POPTART is a blatant parody of the Archie style, one which continues today.

Started in 1945 by Bob Montana, Archie was one of the earliest comics to focus on white American teenagers. It was not the first strip, because older readers will remember HAROLD TEEN and John Held, Jr.'s MERELY MARGIE from the 1920s, so perhaps it would be more appropriate to call it a revival of the teenager. Just where Archie came from is open to debate. I would argue that Montana had been reading a lot of Edward Stratemeyer's HARDY BOY mysteries and that he assimilated the material into his comic strip. Bayport became Riverdale and Frank and Dick Hardy became Archie and Jughead.

To anyone who has ever been to a real high school, the world of Archie is an absurd fantasy. Archie and Jughead would have been routed to the nerd room in ANIMAL HOUSE, but within the safety of their own comic book they always come off as heroes and girls who wouldn't give them the time of day are shown fighting over them which leads one to suspect that the comic book line was designed with a dweeb readership in mind.

Hey, kids read this papola! LIFE WITH ARCHIE, which began as a spin-off in 1958, was in its 279th issue in July of 1990. When the cover showed one of those ditzy Archiette blondes hyped as "Mustang Sally" who was "turning the 90's into the 60's," I had to get into the act. I remembered, of course, that Gary Hallgren had created a character named Mustang Sally for SWANK MAGAZINE in the early seventies and that the two images of women had everything and nothing in common. I also remembered an interview I did with Jay Kinney at Gary Arlington's comic book store circa 1971 during which Kinney told me about his work restyling comic characters, a process whereby an artist is hired to dress old characters in the latest hip fashions supposedly to entice a new reader into buying the same old crapola.

Which it is. The Archie characters haven't changed much since 1945. They are still in high school, which makes them the oldest high school students extant. Fine. Hey, it's only a fantasy, huh? But it seems a bit jarring to me to read about characters who were sixteen in 1945, reflecting upon the sixties from the nineties. Archie would be about sixty now and it's time that old fart got his diploma and threw out those cheesy clothes he's been wearing all these years.

Archie's Mustang Sally is supposed to be the new hippy *chick* on campus. A headband and minidress make her hip. My apologies to feminist readers for using the derogatory term, and I suggest you address your letters to Archie Publications, because they are still as blatantly sexist as they have always been. The opening splash shows four boys ogling Sally as she arrives on campus and by panel three Sally is being put down by a couple of women students for wearing old-fashioned hippy drag. By the end of page two the student movement of the sixties has been trivialized by Sally who tells the others about her hip parents organizing a big protest that lead to nothing more significant than "a longer lunch hour and better library facilities." Sally takes the gang home to her "psychedelic shack," an old Victorian two-storey, and we are treated with some of the most embarassing dialogue ever to ooze out of a comic book. One woman wants to know if Sally's Mom wears hip-hugger suits and go-go boots and Archie tells Sally her parents are 'totally hip.' The issue for the protest is the loss of a football field. Sally's Dad says: "Why don't all of you dudes and chicks come inside for a few minutes and we'll have a heavy rap session." What goes on then is an insult to any eight-year-old's intelligence. The roles of the parents are no different than they would have been in 1945. Guess who goes out to get the punch and cookies? Dad? Guess again. Problem here is that these parents supposedly went to Berkeley in the sixties which is a joke. Dad said their protest was peaceful and orderly, that all they did was pass out flowers and read poetry and listen to folk singers entertain. They were protesting too much violence in sports. What a crock of shit that is. Thousands of people were in the streets of America during the sixties, protesting against the Viet Nam war, against racism, sexism, against discrimination, and against the exploitation of ethnic minorities. People were demanding that the leadership in this country uphold the Constitution as they were elected to do--Hey, what is this crapola, Archie? Why are you lying to young people about history? What is this? Nazi Germany revisited? Sally's Dad says his "protest was really done for fun..like a picnic." The hell it was! A lot of people put their careers and their lives on the line in those protest marches and demonstrations. Life with Archie is a lie, that's what it is. Those people are a gang of old reactionaries in costumes. Teenagers don't look, act, talk, think, or dress like them and as role models they are contemptable. White suburban middle-class Riverdale isn't even a viable fantasy. Most of the young people who came to Haight-Ashbury in the Summer of 1967 ran away from upper echelon ghettos like Riverdale and if you have read any of the novels that have come out of that period you know that most of these people spent their time trying to find themselves via this or that drug or therapy. I don't recall talking to many students during the decade I was teaching around the Bay Area circa 1965-71 who had much good to say about their parents. Why not? What was wrong with Riverdale? Too long to answer here. You can read MIDDLETOWN or THE ORGAN IZATIONAL MAN or THE LONELY CROWD or THE RECKONING or Leary's FLASHBACKS and get the answers for yourself. *I would suggest that instead of teaching the young how to deal with and survive in the world as it is becoming, a multi-ethnic, multinational entity, suburban enclaves try to force the young into an idealized mode of existence which no longer exists anywhere outside the WASP mind.*

Archie is a repository of a fake past, one that never existed anywhere, a world where a pubescent teenager never tries to have sex, never has to confront the complex religious and political contradictions of the adult world, never sees anyone from the third world, never has to deal with drugs and crime, never grows up in a single parent home, never hears about herpes and AIDS and the numerous other perils of modern life. This anachronism now costs a dollar copy and is approved by the Comics Code Authority.

Two thumbs down. Both mine.

PLOP ART

In the sixties we referred to random art attacks as *happenings* but these days they have a new name. It was *plop art* when Richard List plopped a plastic drop cloth over the statue of the Golden Bear that sits in lower Sproul Plaza on the University of California campus at Berkeley. List left a sign nearby which admonished passers-by to *use a condom*. To List, plop art is advertising, boring ads on billboards, and his own pieces carry socially relevant messages. Ah, well, you can buy life-sized condoms in the novelty stores around Berkeley and I suspect this year's round of Hallowe'en parties will exhibit more than a few condomheads.

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SEX SELL

Last Gasp was the only underground company on hand at Wonder Con in Oakland this May. Publisher Ron Turner spent a lot of his time asking boys for their ID cards, a role obviously uncomfortable for him. He told me the Vice Squad came around to his table in San Diego in the Summer of 1989 and was going to bust him for selling CHERRY, because her nipples were showing through the sheer blouse she wore on one cover. Ron talked his way out of the bust by explaining to the cop that he would have to bust every dealer in the room because they were all selling the same type of material, women fighting crime in skintight leotards or nonfunctional shorts and halters, cheesecake for young boys in the painful grip of puberty.

We live in an era of sex sell unlike any other. Nearly every major corporate advertiser uses sex to sell the product, but does the Vice Squad show up at General Foods or General Motors or Lucasfilm or MGM? Does the Vice Squad show up at television stations that show ads for soft drinks? Where was the Vice Squad at the last MISS AMERICA contest when all those women were criss-crossing the stage in bathing suits that left their buns hanging out?

The big difference is whether or not the content is latent or manifest. In ads, sex is associated with the product, but the act is supposedly latent. The big food and beverage companies don't want you to see their ads and race to the nearest massage parlor or brothel for a quickie. They want you to drink a can of sugary water or eat some salty fat chips while you beat your dummy.

The sex in a comic like CHERRY is there for your entertainment. It is all manifest, all up front. CHERRY is pure sex fantasy and if you get off on her antics, fine; if you don't, well, there's always the next Miss America contest. This is what makes CHERRY an enemy of the Vice Squad, protectors of Corporate American Money. They resent her latents being manifest. She's not addicting you to caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, sugar and cholesterol and further enriching the giant drug cartels that run today's world. All Cherry is selling is a comic book.

And *kids* are always the excuse. You couldn't put Cherry on television because of the kids, right? Yet a movie about Archie and his pals recently appeared on CBS and, though Archie is and always has been a kid comic and not an adult comic, guess what happened in that prime time movie? Veronica came over to see Archie and she stripped down to a black lace teddy and tried to seduce the lovable nerd right there in front of all the eight-year-olds! Not only that, but a few scenes later Betty showed up and stripped down to a white teddy and tried to seduce Arch! Then there was Jughead's girl friend wearing a skimpy little outfit--but, hey, this is all okay, huh? It's not a nasty underground comic out to titillate the prurient interest of prepubescent boys, but a nice family television movie. *A couple of ten year old boys trick Betty into bending over so they can look up at her white panties while my Mom and her octagenarian friends watch?* This is okay, but Cherry should be busted as a dirty comic book? Get real, America. There is more raunchy sexuality on television every minute than you'll see in a decade of underground comix. What made Madonna a star? She danced onstage in her underwear and wore garish make-up that outraged feminist mothers and sold tons of records to their daughters. She was just what an establishment record company needed to lash back at feminism.

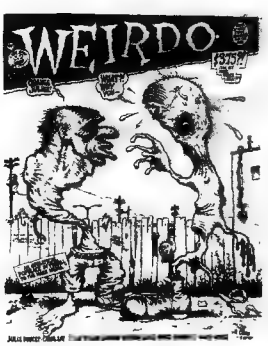
A good motto for underground comix would be Better Blatant Than Latent. The overground has always based its books on the concept of the tease. What the reader buys is the *possibility* that he might see it all in the next issue, because he never sees it in the current one. While secrecy and the promise of pubes to come work as a sales technique, they have never had a positive effect on the readership. Kids need the straight facts about sexuality, not ambiguity. A comic book like CHERRY is a lot healthier than an overground comic which stimulates the reader's anticipation but only delivers satisfaction in terms of brutality and violence. And, yes, the overt violence shown on television is a direct substitute for the sexual acts which are prohibited by a sexually repressive superstructure. Okay to show a woman strangled or beaten or shot or scalded to death in a shower, but not okay to show her having any kind of normal sex.

Overground comics have developed an extremely ambivalent attitude toward sexuality during the past decade and I am sure this attitude is communicating itself to the young reader. Comics that used to be kid comics in the sense that kids from six to fourteen were comfortable with the fantasies in them are now filled with themes that are beyond their emotional and intellectual capacity. Oh, Sure, DC will say THE KILLING JOKE was aimed at a more *mature* readership, but I know the kids who are into Batman's trip bought it or got an older friend to buy it for them. THE KILLING JOKE was a brutal and mean-spirited book, filled with graphic violence, gore, and sado-masochism.

And the Vice Squad worries about a kid seeing a nipple through a t-shirt?

Remember Piper Laurie as vice cop mommy in the film of CARRIE referring to her breasts as *dirty pillows* then think about all those bare breasts that appear in ads in the *women's* magazines. While breasts may be erotic to guys, they are *problems* to the women who have to deal with them. They are always too big or too small or they don't grow evenly or they itch or break out or get lumpy or the aureoles get hairy or you name it, but I have yet to meet a woman who didn't have one or more of these problems on the way to adulthood. A woman told me once that the only perfect breasts were in the *men's* magazines and most of those had to be enhanced with silicone implants and airbrushed to get that way.

I have to laugh at the absurdity of public hypocrisy versus private perversity. A few years ago Howard Chaykin was doing AMERICAN FLAGG, a socially-satirical comic that I enjoyed, and one which was certainly not aimed at the kid reader. Well, FLAGG *was* sold to kids and it was right there on the rack with all the beefy superheroes in their underwear but when Chaykin did BLACK KISS recently, where was it displayed in the stores? With the underground comix. When I heard that LEATHER AND LACE was being printed in both kid and adult versions, I had to wonder what universe this was. How could a title like LEATHER AND LACE possibly apply to the Care Bear and Ninja Turtle junkies?



CARTOONISTS AT WONDER CON

Larry Todd was sitting at a table pencilling a Ninja Turtle when I stopped by. His new baby slept nearby. Mark Bodé was inking one of the turtles. Larry is into dinosaur t-shirts and Mark was just about to go and perform his father's CARTOON CONCERT. Larry Welz had a box of Cherrys before him next to some sketches of her. Steve Lafler was back from New York. He was looking at some rubber stamps in a sample case. Roger May was wearing a Robert Williams t-shirt done for the second Berkeley Con. I wondered how it lasted so long and he said he wore it once a year. I guess I still have one in a box in the basement somewhere. Shelby hugged me and said hello. Another Berkeley Con vet. She still lives in Berkeley. Dan O"Neill was playing the COMIC BOOK CONFIDENTIAL movie on a vcr and I could hear two O"Neill's talking simultaneously. He said the women at the pool table worked for the Mitchell Brothers and the scene took place in Art and Jim's office at the O"Farrell Theater in San Francisco. Crabman was leaving the dealers' room as I walked in. He's been drawing ROCKERS for Rip Off Press. I had coffee with Valentino who is now doing GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY for Marvel. He told me he was putting in 70 hours a week. Mike Manyak was wearing the badge Greg Irons drew for the first Berkeley Con. It took place in 1973 and Mike Friedrich was a guest there; now he's working with Wonder Con and doing the same kind of work I had to do. I knew everyone on the scene then. Today I know most of the people behind the scenes, but very few of the newcomers manning the artists' tables. I think it's a tougher, more impersonal scene now, and if I had any summation I would say *too much business and not enough fun.* They have people working some of the pro booths who can mouth a line of hype as thought it was an actual thought they just had.

I looked around for Ron Turner to bid farewell, but he was gone. His son had a Little League game that afternoon. Reminded me that Ron published Jim Himes' BIG LEAGUE LAFFS back in the Golden Age of ugs, one of or perhaps *the* only underground sports comic.

-Clay Geerdes, May 16, 1990

JAMES MAURY HENSON [1936-1990]

Muppet master Jim Henson died of pneumonia at New York Hospital in Manhattan on May 15, 1990. He was 53. He was born September 24, 1936, in Greenville, Mississippi. His father, Paul, was an agronomist with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Jim Henson's career began when he joined a high school puppet club after his family moved to Hyattsville, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. After high school, he got a job as a puppeteer on a local NBC station and kept the job while he studied acting, staging, and scenic design at the University of Maryland.

Jim Henson first appeared on Tv in a Washington production of Larry Harmon's *Bozo The Clown,* but the first of his characters to appear on national TV was Rowlf the Dog, a muppet originally designed for a dog food commercial. Operated by Henson and Frank Oznowicz, Rowlf the Dog was featured on The Jimmy Dean Show which aired in 1963. This prime time variety show lasted three seasons. Rowlf returned in July of 1967 as the host of OUR PLACE, a summer replacement for the SMOTHERS BROTHERS SHOW. SESAME STREET began on the 10th of November, 1969, developed by Joan Ganz Cooney, executive director of the Children's Television Workshop, a company established in 1967 to produce the series. The show was set along a city street and aimed at inner-city pre-schoolers. Blending skits, songs, puppetry, film footage, and animation, SESAME STREET taught reading, writing, and arithmetic through entertainment. The shows were sponsored by particular letters or numbers presented as commercials. Jim Henson's Muppets were a major part of the world of Sesame Street. Ernie, Bert, Grover, Oscar the Grouch, and The Cookie Monster all had their fans. Big Bird was played by Frank Oz in the early shows and later by Carroll Spinney.

From 1976 to 1981, The Muppets starred in their own half-hour comedy. Kermit the Frog emceed and introduced the guest star who might be Julie Andrews one day and Dolly Parton the next. ABC rejected the show because they did not think adults would watch, so Henson took it to England where it went on to become the most popular first-run syndicated series in TV history. Miss Piggy became a star on the show and her relationship with Kermit is comparable to that of Ignatz and Krazy Kat. She went on to headline a series of Muppet movies, including THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER. Jim Henson was the voice of many of his characters, the Mel Blanc of muppetry.

Henson received numerous awards for his work. He was given an award by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for Outstanding Achievement in Children's Programming for the 1973-74 season, and again in 1978-79 for The Muppets of SESAME STREET. Outstanding Individual Achievement in Children's Programming in 1975-76 season. Outstanding Comedy-Variety or Music Series for 1977-78 was THE MUPPET SHOW. In the 1980-81 Season, Jim Henson was awarded for Outstanding Writing in a Variety, Music, or Comedy Program for his script for THE MUPPET SHOW, featuring Carol Burnett.

Henson and his crew made a number of advances in the art of puppetry and developed a lot of new methods of staging and presentation which were influential in the work of people like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. The rights to the Muppet characters were sold to The Walt Disney Company in 1989. -C.G.

TALES OF JERRY 8 is $3 pp from Jane Oliver, 244 S. A St., Santa Rosa, CA 95401.

HEY, NEETERS! 4 is $1.45 pp from Mike Sagara, POB 1378, Belmont, CA 94002.

Sez Mike: How do you make a fortune in small press?

Answer: You start with a big one.

HALF-ASSED COMICS is $2 from D. Hellman and S. M. Taggart, POB 901, Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10113. 8 1/2 x 11/B/W 24pp. Recommended. CG.

For info on R. Crumb's YOLO PORTFOLIO, send SASE to Water Row Books, POB 438, Sudbury, MA 01776.

Yes, Rip Off Comix is still being published. You can get information on the latest issue from POB 4686, Auburn, CA 95604. Kitchen Sink will send you a free catalog if you write to them at 2 Swamp Rd., Princeton, WISC 54968.

SKUZZ BUTTS COMIX is $2.45 pp from Jeff Gillette, 1998 Huntington, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI 48236.

MISC 34 is $2 pp from Randy Paske, 4841 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741. THE STAMP COLLECTION is $2 from the same address.

TALES OF THE DESIGNERREAL UNIVERSE 2 and 3 for $3 pp from Rikki Leeson, POB 581, Seattle, WA 98105.

Last Gasp has published a nice collection of Larry Welz' CHERRY. Larry was on hand at Wonder Con in Oakland in May signing copies for his fans. CHERRY is up to issue #9. Fan mail to Larry should to go POB 4662, Santa Rosa, CA 95402. Hunt Emerson's FIRKIN THE CAT is in its third issue. WEIRDO ends for awhile with issue #27. I was told the Crumb family was moving to France and a few months down the line we might see a more international WEIRDO. #27 features Crumb, S. Clay Wilson, Bruce Duncan, Carol Lay, and many of your favorites. John Howard's HORNY BIKER SLUT COMICS #1 is Last Gasp's latest comic book. Write to 2180 Bryant Street, San Francisco, CA 94110 for a catalog if you cannot get these underground comix in your area. Remember to include a statement that you are a bonafide adult or they can not do business with you.

WILDMAN 7 is $2.50 pp from Richard Green, PO BOX 46825, Chicago, IL 60648. Ask about back issues.

The second issue of RAW, the book, is out from Penguin Books. Cover by Joost Swarte. Featured are Lynda Barry, Drew Friedman, Justin Green, Artie Spiegelman, and numerous other artists.

BACK IN CIRCULATION: A Quasi-Autobiography by Steven F. Scharff is 50¢/Stamp from 2020 Ostwood Terrace, Union, NJ 07083.

PUMA BLUES 22 and 23 have been published by Mirage. Queries re this environmentally oriented comic should be addressed to POB 774, Northhampton, MA 01061-0774.

In the latest issue of RESEARCH, we learn that Zip, the pinhead who worked with Barnum's circus in the 1920s and was the inspiration for Bill Griffith's Zippy, was an American Negro.

A NEW DICK TRACY BIO

Penguin has just released Jay Meader's DICK TRACY: THE OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY. Very nice trade paperback with reprints of some of the early dailies and Sundays. Far superior to the reprint of CELEBRATED CASES which reduced all the strips to postage stamp size. Meader gives biographies of all of Gould's better known villains and the book is indexed for quick reference. It could use a bibliography, but you can't have everything. $16.95 at your local comic book dealer.

DICK TRACY REDUX

I'm a big Gould fan. I used to buy the Harvey reprints, even though they were censored under the CCA. Do you remember how they used to white out guns and corpses? Some crook would be yelling "Hands up!" only they'd white out the gun so he'd just be pointing at his victims, or cops would be looking at a dead body only all you'd see would be a green blob of color. What was really funny was that the mayhem was allowed in daily newspapers, but not in the comic book reprints. Only one of the many hypocricies of the Code.

As surreal as the Dick Tracy strip was I almost think that Gould thought he was doing it straight. Every interview I ever read with him he touted his scientific approach to crime-fighting, and his use of real techniques, but that was where the reality of the strip ended. You mention Breathless stabbing a woman in the back with garden shears when she could have knocked her out and that's an example of the kind of villains Gould used to set you up for [that old *love to hate* routine]. My favorite crazy plot was the one where a crime boss is paying blackmail money to an old woman who has a Judge Crater type in a tree. The crime boss had murdered the judge twenty years before and hidden his body in a tree in the Amazon jungle. The old woman had the tree, still with skeleton in it transplanted to her green house in the U.S. My feeling is, why didn't the crime boss just throw the judge in the Amazon river when he killed him, or barring that, why not just bump off the old lady and dispose of the corpse? Of course if he'd done that there wouldn't have been a plot, as screwy and illogical though it was.

PAR HOLMAN [5/18/90]

It is strange that the artist should have no standards and be constantly trying to live up to other people's standards.

-Walter Inglis Anderson

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DICK TRACY R.I.P.

Warren Beatty hasn't convinced me that *period* Dick Tracy is such a good idea. His performance on the Donahue Show [6/21/90] was a lot more fun than his stuffy portrayal of old Plainclothes Tracy. I like seeing all that old stuff, the cars, the tommy guns, but I think a high-tech modernized DT would have done better on the market. Compared to ROBOCOP and TOTAL RECALL, the stunt action sucks. Don't we get enough nostalgia from those yearly tours of Spielberg's toy collection?

Hyper-hype notwithstanding, any character in a rain slicker carrying an outdated machine gun is going to have a hard time competing with characters like The Terminator and Robocop. The problem with all the advanced PR is it makes you [me, for sure.] sick of the characters before the movie even opens. That little *behind the scenes* tv clip did nothing for me. On the one hand they are praising the color scheme, saying they used only the same six colors that were used to print the old DT Sundays, patting themselves on the back for their authenticity, but this is only surface autheticity, because the film violates most of Gould's characters. I've got news for Beatty. Breathless Mahoney was a cold-blooded murderer, a money-grubbing, back-stabbling scumbag in Gould's forties strip. She was no torch singer and Tracy never caught her. She was strangled by B. O. Plenty. Why bother to be authentic with the goddamned colors when you are going to lie about the history of the characters? And, sure, it's a lie. *Even if their history is fictional, it is what Gould's readers think of as the truth about them.*

And there are only *three* primary colors, not *six*, tv folks. Where did you guys go to school?

I enjoyed the DICK TRACY movie and I realize that the aspects of it which bother me will mean nothing to a generation untroubled by the actual history of characters like Little Face, Mumbles, and Breathless Mahoney. My point is the Chester Gould strips provide enough action that it is not necessary to reshape and lie about the destinies of the various heavies, particularly when your selling point purports to be authenticity! If Beatty wanted to design a new character as a femme fatale and foil for Tracy, fine, but why not give her a name of her own? The character played by Madonna isn't the Breathless Mahoney Gould created, so why upset the older fans by saying she is? To lump all Gould's villains together in one giant conspiracy against Tracy is to deny them their uniqueness. As for Beatty's portrayal of Tracy, most of the film he looked like an aging actor making a hemorrhoids commericial. I don't know what he thinks those facial close-ups are supposed to mean, but I thought he was in need of a good shot of metamucil. I know Tracy was an uptight character and Beatty was trying to keep that aspect of him onscreen, but he was so inanimate most of the time he might as well have been wrapped in latex along with Prune Face and the others. No background was given on his relationship with Tess or how she got involved with him, why she would be interested in an aging cop who ran around in a yellow raincoat even when it wasn't raining. No explanation as to why Dick had both Pat Patton and Sam Ketchum working with him when most cops only have one partner at a time and Gould was always careful to research his police procedure. You'd think Beatty would have known that Ketchum became Dick's partner after the death of Patton, but the people involved in making these mega-comic strip films have a way of ignoring the field and doing whatever they feel like doing no matter what it does to the film or the characters therein.

I feel the same way about those Dick Tracy comic books from Disney. That character is all right, but he's not Dick Tracy anymore than Beatty is.

N. B.: This cops and robhers stuff is all bullshit anyway. Some Chicago cops were on the pad as were many of the politicians during the era of Prohibition [1920-33] which handed this country over to organized crime. It was Eliot Ness and his crew that fought actively against Al Capone and his followers. For the actual history of this period, I recommend Klingaman's 1929: THE YEAR OF THE GREAT CRASH, 1989. -Clay Geerdes

MICHAELANGELO, MEET McSNURTLE!

Though Eastman and Laird's Ronin parody has now filled the preadolescent psyche with Mutant Ninja Turtles, this was not the first time a turtle was used for such a purpose. In FUNNY STUFF. [New York: National Periodicals], DC cartoonists parodied their own funny animals and McSNURTLE THE TURTLE became THE TERRIFIC WHATZIT, a parody of THE FLASH, THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE. THE FLASH has his own television series starting this September. Maybe DC will catch up with TMNT.

TENDER CINEMATIC MOMENT OF THE WEEK: Four turtles united with their rat atop a building in New York. When I was certain I wouldn't be surrounded by a thousand geeky little kids in turtle t-shirts giggling *Cowabunga* at each other, I slipped into a mall matinee and watched the NINJA TURTLE movie. I enjoyed the cameraderie of the turtles a great deal, but found the rest of the plot racist, sexist, and unenlightened, a throwback to the days of *inscrutable orientals* a la Wu Fang, Ming the Merciless, and Fu Manchu. For me, it was FISTS OF FURY in muppet drag. Thankfully, the filmmakers spared us the absurdity of having the token woman crawl into bed with Raphael. Don't laugh. Bestiality came into vogue with Howard the Duck and Beverly and continues routinely in Disney's new ROGER RABBIT comic book. If you don't see this as insulting to women, you probably think HARLEM NIGHTS was a compliment to the Black community. -C.G.

NEGATOONS

The third Roger Rabbit cartoon was shown with the Beatty movie and it was a repeat of the first two, brilliant animation of totally unsympathetic and unfunny characters, Baby Herman and Roger Rabbit. The cartoon didn't get one single laugh from the audience I sat with, not one. And it is easy to see why not. Baby Herman is a disgusting little asshole and no one cares if he gets used as a dart board or bounced out of a roller coaster. Roger's voice is enough to make anyone hate him the first time he opens his mouth. These cartoons are cruel and violent and lack any human feeling and the people making them may think they are upstaging Tex Avery, but they need to go back and look at those early cartoons a little more carefully. There has to be a reason why we love Bugs Bunny and Droopy and I think the misguided animators will find it's the same reason we hate Roger and that disgusting little cigar-smoking refugee from the old OUR GANG shorts. These Maroon cartoons, like many of the thrillers of today, try to overpower the viewer with violence and sound effects, but this only works with clods. Anyone who thinks realizes that any cartoon that lacks a balance of sympathy isn't going to satisfy. The viewer left an Avery cartoon feeling satisfied. There was always a catharsis, a relief of tension. You walk out of a Roger Rabbit cartoon feeling like someone just gave you a beating. He's a frenetic little anxiety-neurotic and simply not a credible leading character.

Roger needs revision badly. Even in the new Disney comic book, he is failing. He must either be active or passive and if he is passive he has no raison d'etre. Thus far, he's basically superfluous. The sexism and the bestiality have to go. Women do not marry rabbits even in comic books and when women figure in comic book stories they have to function as people, not props. Jessica Rabbit shows up in ROLLER COASTER RABBIT for a few seconds tied to the tracks as the roller coaster speeds over her. A single sight gag. As far as we know she is *still* tied to the tracks, because she was never released in the film. I would suggest the animators sit down and look at this stuff and think about it for awhile. Technology is not all. Cartoons may be computer generated these days, but the audience is still human.

-Clay Geerdes

HEY, NEETERS 5 is $1.45 pp from Saga Graphics, POB 1378, Belmont, CA 94002. A good story. Made me chuckle.

EL VIBORA 125 is $8 pp from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain. EL VIBORA reruns stories by Robert Crumb and Gilbert Shelton in Spanish.

LEX PORNOGRAPHICUS

"It cannot be reasonably argued that the violence, perversion, abuse of women, graphic depictions of all forms of sexual conduct, and microscopic descriptions of human genitalia contained on this recording are comedic art," stated U. S. District Court Judge Jose Gonzalez declaring 2 LIVE CREW's *As Nasty as They Wanna Be* obscene. "It is an appeal to *dirty* thoughts and the loins, not to the intellect and the mind."

[Between these two quotations, 2 Live Crew was busted in Broward County, Florida. This, in a state that has an economy based upon laundered drug money--see Brian Freemantle's THE FIX for details.]

"Whether the lyrics are silly, offensive, vulgar or even violent, is beside the point. They are words, and according to our most treasured constitutional document, the First Amendment, we have the right to say them and hear them. . . If we don't fight for the juvenile and vulgar lyrics of 2 Live Crew, we are weakening our own First Amendment protections."

-Brenda Payton
Oakland TRIBUNE
6/12/90.

2 Live Crew's album cover had four women with their bare buns exposed for the buyer to see. Gee, I wonder why they didn't bust the Miss Universe Pageant. -C. G.

Rap is nothing new. In the forties this form of adolescent linguistic oneupmanship was called *doing the nines* or *the dozens* . You can read about this in THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X which was ghost-written by Alex Haley. Shakespeare was fond of this form and used it often in his comedies. The same use of rhythm and language is found throughout Classical Greek drama. The boom box that emphasizes contemporary American rap is analogous to a jungle drum and when the message is political, which it often is, one cannot help but recall the early talking blues of bob dylan.

PINK UNDERWEAR WHAT?

Wagner used themes like aging, child abuse, incest and the loss of one's eyes. And Wagner himself had some striking psychiatric problems. He had real anxieties about his body and several fetishes. He would fondle satin cloth while writing, and he had special costumes made, including a pair of pink underwear that excited him.

--UCSF Psych Prof Peter Ostwald, quoted by Martin Snapp in the Oakland TRIBUNE, 6/7/90.

Question is, what would the judge have said about Wagner's RING TRILOGY?

5 O'CLOCK SHADOW 3 is $1 pp from Not Available Comics, 3867 Bristow, Detroit, MI 48212. Matt Madden did the cover and Matt Feazall is inside!

MEDIA ABSURDITY

A woman on a panel on DONAHUE says one out of every three women in LA will be raped or assaulted. Donahue says, and we hope you'll join us and the audience applauds as the screen goes to a kool aid commercial. August 17, 1981

Rabbit feels that his world is changing. I have him say that if there is no Cold War he doesn't see the point of being an American anymore.
John Updike on his fourth Rabbit Angstrom novel, RABBIT AT REST. 6/90

While my classmates were deciding which colleges to apply to, I was deciding which gun to wear with what sequinned dress!
Priscilla Presley, 1985

Figment is using fantasy, horror, and sci-fi stuff. Write to Barb or J. C. Hendee for their information. POB 3566, Moscow, ID 83843-0477.

Those interested in John Wade III's C Sheet should send him 25 ¢ and a stamped envelope for a sample issue. Box 6308, Fort Wayne, Ind. 46896.

Did you know John Updike wanted to be a cartoonist? His mother kept a scrapbook of his childhood drawings and he met his first wife when he hung out with the gang at the Harvard LAMPOON. "I think people that draw and paint are happier than those who write," said Updike in a 1985 interview.

JUDY BLUME ON CENSORSHIP

We often think of censorship in terms of books being taken off the library shelves or out of our favorite bookstore, but the most insidious kind of censorship occurs *before* a book appears in print. July Blume told her audience at the 90th Annual American Booksellers' Convention in Las Vegas about an incident where an editor asked her to *reconsider* a paragraph in one of her scheduled books that dealt with masturbation by a teenaged character. She took it out and regretted her decision later.

"If I was this sensitive as an established author," she said, "imagine how the fear of offending can influence a beginning writer. Censorship is not just about books being removed from libraries and book stores. It is about writers who fail to write truly." The ABA has launched the Foundation for Free Expression, an organization designed to advise booksellers on how to handle outside pressure to remove material on sale in their stores.

Ken Greene has CURLEY TAILS FROM SHAKESPEARE for 50¢/stamp.
753 Tamarack Ave. San Carlos, CA 94070.

GREY LEGACY 0 is available from Wayne Wise and Fred Wheaton, RD 1, Box 115, Graysville, PA 15337. DZ, Nice.

OMOWALE 2 is $1.75 pp from By Any Means Necessary. POB 111271, Omaha, NE 68111-5271. Omowale is a Yoruka word meaning *the child has come home* . This issue has an interesting retrospective on Black comic book characters by Keith Henry Brown entitled *Growing up Black Reading Comics.*

ACE TALKS BACK

While I agree with your comments in COMICS/FX that editors/publishers have no obligation to respond to unsolicited work, I think it's a different story when it comes to specifically solicited work. Yet, I've found with so many of these publishers you get the same result anyway. And I for one am getting sick of being blown off by these guys just cuz they know we're powerless nobodies who they can jack off to their heart's content cuz they could care less.

In any other profession if you're hired to do a specific piece of work, you produce the piece of work, and then not only are you NOT paid, but you're also completely blown off without even an explanation, I believe that would be grounds for lawsuits. And yet in the comics field that's standard operating procedure. I was wondering if any of your readers have suffered similar discourtesies and how they have dealt with the situation. [5/24/90]

Ace Backwards

Any comments, readers? C. G.

MISS TEEN AMERICA

I caught a few minutes of MISS TEEN USA and I think if we ever again invade Panama or Grenada or another one of those tough countries in a display of national heroism, we ought to send those 51 women, vaselined teeth, depilated pubes and all; hey, who would fire on an aerobic squad decked out in pink spandex? Some of those women--weary, no doubt, from all that smiling and bootlicking--had a feral look and I expected to see them gnawing right out of the tube any minute. I could see myself running down the hall of the apartment with a rabid teenager clamped to each ankle. Mostly innies, did you notice that? I think they discriminate against outies at the pageants. Maybe they make the entrants have plastic surgery the way they make most of them shave off their natural eyebrows so the brows will match those false lashes. Next time you go to a pageant, ask the duty surgeon if you can see his collection of entrants' outies.

Each one of these pageants is a two hour ad for the next one. The show promotes the illusion of glamour to your daughter so she will mail in her entry blank and join the supply of fresh meat that must be kept in reserve to ensure that the entire system does not collapse of its own emptiness. This is plastic America at its apex. All that dressing and undressing, all that anxiety, all those mommies out there wringing their hands as the judges push the buttons. I always wonder at those numbers. How would I feel if my ass was only a 6.73? Twelve finalists are chosen and each in turn lights up and gushes and hugs someone nearby before hurrying down to line up at the front of the stage. What has happened, of course, is that her 39 fellow anorexics have just been defined as losers and their fretful mommies are weeping out in the dark somewhere--a whole year of dance and voice lessons down the tubes, all that rotten disco music listened to for zip. There follows a two hour war of attrition as woman after woman is computed away from the glittery little crown.

All of this takes place in Mississippi this year and these contests are mainly a Southern trip. It's still 1860 there where the slave block lives on, its black worker replaced by a glossy teenager who will win the privilege of selling makeup and other useless crap to her peers until next summer when she will be replaced by a clone of herself. Oh, not all these young women will go into the service of ad companies; a few will connect and become the mistresses of the rich, and one or two will even marry into money, become company wives with the privilege of entertaining their husbands' friends. This has been a major lure since beauty pageants replaced the Ziegfield Follies. This is white Mississippi we are watching in this pageant. No black people. No poverty. No footage of the real Mississippi. You have to watch Les Blank's films for that.

Onstage the women crisscross in their bathingsuits and high heels. No nipples. These are playthings here, not mothers. Nipples are for nursing so they have to be hidden. The women are clustered around the stage in ridiculous poses conceived by some women-hating clod and one can't help but ask how so many are so easily conned so often. The last two wait alone in the video eye and then there is one, the winner, the chump who gets the privilege of promoting the products, of posing in front of countless assholes in countless malls around the country, the loser who has been conned into thinking herself a winner because she fits into the mold programmed into the pageant computer. Tears. Applause. Waving, bowing, scraping, and cut to commercial. The real winners can go home and forget about it--until the next pageant is announced.

-C.G.
7/16/90

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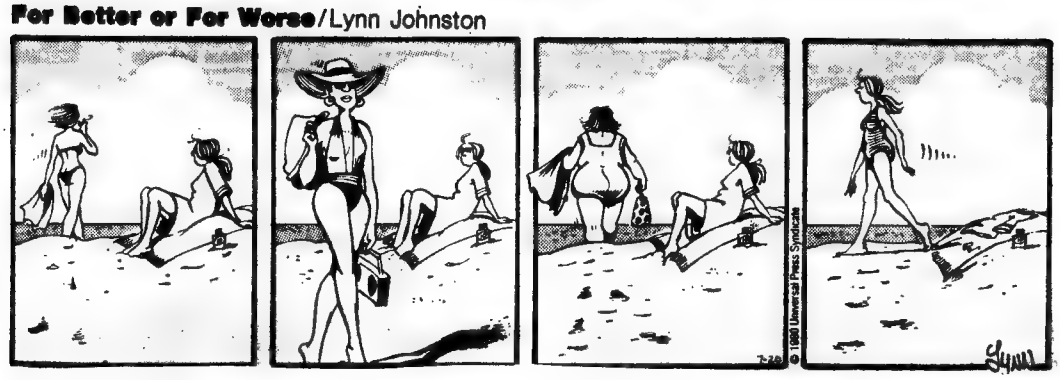
For Better or For Worse/Lynn Johnston



COMIX PLUGOLA

Mary Fleener sent me a copy of her SLUTBURGER STORIES. Great cover and a number of interesting little vignettes re life in the fast lane in Southern California. I suspect the title is more surreal than pejorative. Spain, as I recall, once did a story for YOUNG LUST entitled BURGER SLUT. Fleener often fuses cubistic art with a realistic story line and her page designs lean toward iconography. Her chiarooscuro technique is quite effective in the black and white medium. --Clay Geerdes

Another nice story by Mike Sagara in HEY, NEETERS 6. Mike has a tight cartooning style and a fine ear for dialogue. $1.50 pp from him, Saga Graphics, POB 1378, Belmont, CA 94002.

Market research has had an extraordinary effect upon the American public. The average citizen is so well accustomed to answering any number of idiot questions about himself that he has become quite incapable of telling strangers to mind their own damned business. Virtually anyone will reveal virtually anything about himself once he is convinced that the questions are purposeless, designed only to facilitate the waste of corporate time and money.

Lawrence Block
AFTER THE FIRST DEATH, 1969

Check out MEAN STREETS, a critical DZ run on a computer. Easy to read. Howard Cruse writes on censurship. Get #4 for $1 pp from Concrete Caverns Graphix, 70-A Greenwich Ave., Suite 186, New York, NY 10011.

All you have to do to educate a child is leave him alone and teach him to read. The rest is brainwashing.

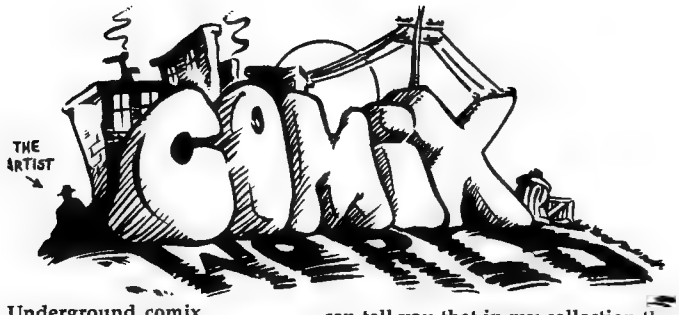
-Ellen Gilchrist

The writer must trust the reader to be at least as intelligent as he is. Only in such a well wishing and trust, only when the writer feels he is writing a letter to a good friend, only then will the magic happen.

-Ellen Gilchrist

X-RATED FUNNIES

Would you believe Lynn Johnston got away with having Elizabeth show her Daddy an essay on "The Copulation of Canada" in her June 5 FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE strip? Times change. Jack Katz told me once about the clean-up guys who work for the syndicates. One of their chores is to white out hands the artist has accidentally or deliberately drawn in the wrong area, i.e., too close to a breast or crotch, and place them in neutral positions. The Johnston strip was a play on Liz's misspelling, but it would never have run in the days of Captain Patterson.



While it is true that Underground comix broke the hold of the Comics Code of 1954, this could not have happened had not wider subcultural changes taken place simultaneously. Underground newspapers were far more critical in the battle against censorship and it was in these weekly tabloid papers that the comix were first seen and read by most of us at that time.

I read a piece in MEAN STREETS which labelled the underground comix misogynistic; well, there were misanthropic comix drawn during this period as well and I'm growing weary of this constant genderbashing. There are only two sexes and every artist, man or woman, draws both of them and how they are drawn depends on a great many factors. A drawn figure whether it appears in a comic book or on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is not a real person. Art deals with fantasy figures and I am no more certain that it is feasible to call an artist a sexist for drawing his fantasy woman with big breasts than it is to call him a democrat for drawing unflattering caricatures of Nixon and Reagan and Bush. The way a man or woman draws the opposite sex depends upon a combination of skill and orientation. Guy Colwell was trying to deal with this in his recent DOLL series.

Is it possible that the idealization of human character in art is inherently sexist? If I am going to draw a fantasy woman and involve her in my own personal fantasy via comic art, I am going to draw her any way I wish to draw her. The size of her breasts is up to me and what happens to her in the story is whatever keeps me interested. When Robert Crumb drew his sex comix in the early seventies and published them in SNATCH, JIZ, and BIG ASS COMIX, he never suggested that the fantasies were anyone else's--they were *his*. The people who bought and read his fantasies did so of their own free will and those who argued that what Crumb was doing was degrading women have a valid argument only if they accept those creatures in Crumb's comic as real women. I do not. They are not. *Beauty pageants are degrading to women; comic fantasies are not. In the contests, real women are paraded around onstage in skimpy bathing suits and high heeled shoes. This is meat market exploitation. Crumb's weird sex fantasies are either funny to you or they are not, but they have not sold a single woman into corporate slavery.*

Underground comix were a mixture of humor and political satire and unconventional ideas and while they amused me and my friends, I am sure they offended the hell out of parents trying to raise their children and keep them on the straight and narrow path. The comix were not one thing, but many, and it is a mistake to try to talk about them in general, but we always try because of space limitations. I can tell you that in my collection there are comix dealing with a lot more themes than sex, drugs and rock and roll music. I would suggest a look at the comix of Georg Metzger whose MOONDOG and TRUCKIN' depict the retribalization theme and assimilate many of the ideas that were afloat in the subcultural stream of the late sixties. Look at the work of Rand Holmes and Shary Flenniken and Bobby London and Joyce Farmer and countless others who produced a great deal of grassroots comic writing and art. Hey, to refer to underground comix collectively as sexist or even exclusively male is to deny the work of hundreds of artists who were consciously writing and drawing stories that opposed sexism. Had it not been for the pioneers who created underground comix and fought for their independence, there would have been no women's comix movement.

From the beginning, the women's comix movement was supported by some men--not all, there were many who hated the women's comix and still do. It was Ron Turner who put up the money for the benefit comic that became IT AIN'T ME BABE, COMIX, the first women's comic. The first comic book to be written, drawn, and published by women was TITS 'N' CLITS. Now at first the women cartoonists, most of whom lived with or were married to male underground cartoonists, having had their consciousnesses raised by the women's liberation movement which appeared in Berkeley for the first time in the Fall of 1969, wanted to be in the comix being done by the men and the men wouldn't let them in. If the men had let them in, the women's comix movement might have become nothing but a footnote to male underground comix; as it was this rejection spurred groups of women to do it for themselves. Thus WIMMEN'S COMIX became an overtly sexist comic book, right? It is if you define sexist as that which excludes a contributor on the basis of gender. I remember hearing women put down ZAP as a boys' club, because by issue 3 it was closed door, a group of men who claimed the space for themselves. But what evolved was not all separatist politics, because there were comic books and magazines that included both sexes. Dan O'Neill's Air Pirates Studio in San Francisco trained a number of young women artists, some of whom went on to lengthy careers as cartoonists.

It's next to impossible to summarize underground comix. We're dealing with thousands of books here. Some were autobiographical. Some were subcultural drug fantasies. Some were esoteric sex fantasies. Some were books drawn to fit a specific audience. Some were underground alternatives to overground superheroes. All were referred to as adult comix however adolescent the fantasies therein. When sexism entered the language circa 1968-69 from the writings of feminist scholars at Smith and Sarah Lawrence, it caused a lot of artistic reaction on both sides. There were comix that attacked sexists and comics that poked fun at the attackers, books like Bob Sidebottom's SUPERBITCH. Is a parody of a parody of a sexist fantasy sexist? The entire debate expanded to absurd proportions.

In the end underground comix became a marginal business dominated by men and it still is. A few women-owned companies may still exist on paper but they seldom produce any books. As of mid-1990, the major publishers of underground material are Last Gasp Comix, Rip Off Press, Kitchen Sink, and Fantagraphics. Of these four, only Rip Off Press is supported exclusively by underground publications. The others make their main income from other materials. --Clay Geerdes

COMIX PLUGOLA

Robert Pasternak's ACID MAN 13 and 14 are available from Comix Wave for $1/stamp. Entire set of 14 for $6.50 pp.

Some new work by Ed DeVore and Garry Hardman appears in CALCULATED RISK 1. This book should be available at your local dealer soon for $2.50. If you would like to contact Ed about contributing to a future issue, write to him at RD 7, Box 86, Meadville, PA 16335.

The following new minicomix should be ordered from Starhead Comix, POB 30044, Seattle, WA 98103.

TESTOSTERONE CITY by Peter Bagge. $1/stamp.

STORM WARNINGS/ Steve Willis $2.45 pp.

DOG BITS, MORTY THE DOG 2 $2.45 pp.

BAD TEENS by J. R. Williams. 90¢ pp.

LUMP SOUP SCIOLPLUILEAS! [Chester Brown and Steve Willis] 80¢ pp.

Bruce Duncan is still cartooning. He recently did a booklet of THE NATURE AND SPIRIT CARTOON SHOW and he might run you a copy for $3 pp. You've seen Duncan's work in recent issues of WEIRDO. Mail reaches him at BEFP/2425 College Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704.

Jaka's Story continues in CEREBUS 134, 135, and the CEREBUS reprint series is now up to #37. Check your local comic book store.

The latest from NICE DAY COMIX, 911 Park St. S. W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504-6241:

DICK HUNGRY: PRIVATE EYE for 50¢/stamp., a minicomic parody of MS. TREE.

PAPER DOLLIES from the world of self-published comics. $3 pp. DZ

From Randy Paske, 4841 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 9631.

ALL COVER COMICS, 25¢/stamp.

DOG COMIX 5, 50¢/stamp.

MISC 35. $1.95 pp.

UGLY ART LIVES

R. K. Sloane and Jeff Gaither did the art for the latest CD by The Accused.

COMIX PLUGOLA

While a number of different artists and writers are getting a crack at their interpretation of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the adaptation of the film was written by Peter Laird and laid out by Kevin Eastman. Look for this book at your local store. Eastman, Laird and Eric Talbot did the inks. Gary Fields lettered. Fan mail and other commentary should go to Mirage Studios, Box 417, Haydenville, MA 01039. A second TMNT movie is in the works.

HARPOON is a new humor mag/tabloid which has just appeared as a freebie around San Francisco. A lot of mags have started this way, depending on local ads for financial support. There was a HARPOON mag out of New York back in the seventies done in the style of the NATIONAL LAMPOON. Like APPLE PIE, it featured work by underground cartoonists. This new humor sheet is published by Scott Zeller and the address is 2405 16th Street., San Francisco, CA 94110. FAX: 415-621-3265. Send a couple of bucks for a sample and bear in mind that this is local stuff so contributions from outside the Bay Area are unlikely to get in. -CG

CLOTHING OPTIONAL is 50¢/stamp from Ken Greene, 753 Tamarack Ave., San Carlos, CA 94070. A nice mini gag book.

A sample copy of John Wade III's C Sheet is 25¢/stamp from him at Box 6308, Fort Wayne, IND 46896.

When people start paying more for the popcorn than for the movie--they turn to crime. -Erma Bombeck, 1990.

CREATIVITY VS PARISITISM

If only creativity and money could be separated. But it can't, if only because each artist--be he (she) painter, writer, poet, composer--anyone, who makes something where nothing was before, provides occupation and profit for so many others. Just as the criminal supports on his angry shoulders a whole army of policemen, sociologists, magistrates, governors, jailers, prison officials, journalists, commentators, reform societies, Ministers of State and so on--all dependent upon his ability to perform a criminal act--so does each act of artistic creation support publishers, critics, libraries, galleries, theaters, concert halls, actors, printers, framers, musicians, ushers, janitors, academics, arts councils, the organizers of international cultural exchanges, art administrators, Ministers of the Arts and so forth--and the weight can seen excessive, the rewards so astonishingly little, and society's expectation that the artist will do it for free (or just enough to keep him alive and still producing) for sheer abstract love of form, beauty, Art, oh Art--while those who are parasitical upon the artist will command high salaries, higher status--oh intolerable, extraordinary!

Fay Weldon
The Hearts and Lives of Men, 1987.

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A Note to Bill Watterson

There is absolutely nothing funny about kidnapping and the recent sequence of CALVIN AND HOBBES in which Calvin kidnaps Susie's doll and holds it for ransom made me angrier each morning I saw it. There are hundreds of families in this country who have suffered the loss of children to kidnappers and murderers. For a long time, Calvin was one of my favorite strips, but lately he has developed into a vicious, mean-spirited little kid who seems to hate his parents and everyone else. Maybe it's time you stepped back and took a look at what you are doing to your character, Bill. C.G.

ROUNDHOUSE COMICS 1 is 50¢/stamp from Victor Gates, 552 Lancelot Drive, No. Salt Lake, UTAH 84054.

MONDO COMIX

A new comic store specializing in underground comix has opened on Telegraph Avenue near the Alcatraz intersection in Oakland, California. The staff includes Bob Brown who opened Nemesis Comics in Everett, Washington, and Comic Strip in Seattle.

BERNARD KLIBAN

1935-1990

Cat cartoonist Bernard Kliban died Sunday, August 12, 1990. A regular in PLAYBOY for many years, Kliban attended Underground '76 and participated in subsequent comic conventions until his death. A heavy smoker, Kliban lived in Corte Madera. He had heart surgery on July 31 and died at UC Medical Center in San Francisco.

© Clay Geerdes, Box 7081, Berkeley, Ca 94707.

HOMICIDE
review by DAVIS WALLACH

The Dark Horse entry into the pseudo-realistic genre of police fiction has arrived. Titled *Homicide*, it purports to be based on an actual New York City police case. Instead, it turns out to be a shallow and pretentious piece of hackwork based more on Victorian detective fiction than any true-to-life rendering of a homicide investigation.

The single police investigator is a piece of cinematic fiction. NYC homicide detectives work in pairs preparing detailed reports to their superiors of their endeavors. Few if any dangerous chases are undertaken. The firing of a gun, visiting witnesses alone, riding and visiting crucial areas of investigation without a partner as done in the story are grounds for suspicion.

The use of cinema-noir techniques by John Arcudi and Doug Mahnke remind me of the work of Argentinian artists in such books as *Cabby* and of Chester Gould's DICK TRACY. There isn't anything new or revelatory here. I was hoping for better.

I charge two copies of your zine for a plug in CW. I will run your cover on a space available basis if you send me a small two or three inch stat. I don't run hardcore sex stuff in the newsletter, so if that's your trip, sorry. C.G.

TIAJUANA BIBLE OBSOLETION?

Clay, cheap porn may make the Tiajuana Bible obsolete as a form of erotica but not as an outlet for social criticism and parody. Comix are the way the non-rich make movies. The Tiajuana Bible is a viable art form and an American traditional folk art. TJBS Forever.

On the other hand, the Tiajuana Brass sound a bit dated.

Oh, well, as the saying is paraphrased: Folk Art, let's dance.

--Randy H. Crawford

Randy's latest Dirty L'il Comic is THE GA-GA GAZEBO STORY. 50¢/stamp, 911 Park St. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504-6241.

IS THERE LIFE AFTER GROUPIE?

As a rule, musicians are not fun. The best of them are characters in their own right. They've developed a style and personality that it is possible for you to get off on. Most of them take themselves so seriously. In the sixties the thing I thought was the downfall of most groups is that they thought they were really doing something--really making a statement. And they were out there night after night playing to audiences of thirteen- and fourteen-year-old girls. How can you get any satisfaction out of that if you are a mature responsible male? You can't go on deluding yourself. Some people did by taking vast quantities of drugs. Then they go get these ladies to hang on their arm and they're selling something to a bunch of thirteen-year-olds. This business is about image. The music business has nothing to do with music anymore.

--Gail Zappa in ROCK WIVES, 1986.

The comics community is a ghetto in most respects. Those within buy, read, and collect comics, go to conventions and hero-worship the artists, and in general focus their lives around the form and content of the comic book. Writers within this ghetto are always on the defensive, imagining attack from without when there is a lot more indifference than malice. The average American worker reads his newspaper funnies every day and buys the comic books that are a part of his children's lives, yet he feels insulted if anyone suggests that *he* reads comic books. I say American, because this is not a European or Asian attitude. Comic books have no stigma attached to them in Italy, Japan, or France. Indeed, a French book illustrator may draw graphic albums [glorified comic books] all he pleases and his publisher remains untroubled, but let an American cartoonist approach one of the upper echelon in the publishing establishment in the USA and see how quickly he gets the bum's rush.

What we have done in the past couple of decades is turn this around. Those of us who inhabit the fantasy ghetto have our own parties and our own private conventions and since the late sixties we have had little trouble getting all the comics and comix we want from the hundreds of comic specialty shops that dot the map. Within the comics ghetto, we praise and promote the medium and negate the unenlightened attitudes of those outsiders who deign to put us down for our habit. We have, in effect, kept our child selves alive, while the outsiders have bought the con that adulthood is something worth attaining.

The comics ghetto is invisible and it transcends class and racial barriers. At any comic convention, one will find the rich and the poor of all races thumbing through the boxes in search of missing issues and rare items. A great many comics fans hide their true identities all year and only reveal them at the conventions. Some of these folks are into Games, others into organized groups like the Society for Creative Anachronism, but all are into the fantasy lore that makes up the core of comicdom. There are comics people in high offices and I am not referring to the executives at Marvel or Disney, but to those who work for companies like Apple and IBM and PG&E. Numerous college professors are into comics, though most are forced to hide behind a *popular culture* cover.

The comics ghetto is less insular today than it was back in the days when collectors prowled around in the huckster rooms of science fiction conventions looking for ECs and Marvel Mytery Comics. Comic Conventions helped, but the comic store movement had the most to do with the shift toward a mass audience and away from a cultic one.

People need more fantasy when reality becomes bleeker. We learned this from the Depression of the thirties when movie and comic book companies made fortunes while other businesses dropped left and right. We will see the same trend in the 1990s.

In 1935, a comic book sold for a dime and had 64 pages of comic strips, most of them reprinted from the newspapers. By the early forties, most comic books had original stories and carried a few pages of advertisements. They were still a dime. It was not until the sixties that the price of comics rose. Today's comic book may cost anywhere from 75¢ to $3.95 and it may contain as much as 60% ads. The first wave of comic books peaked in 1946 when television was priced into the mass market and comic books didn't begin to grow again until the early fifties with Gaines' ECs and Kurtzman's MAD. Marvel began to grow again in the early sixties under the leadership of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko and the entire industry got the benefit when underground comix were circulated through the weekly underground newspapers and effectively destroyed the Comics Code of 1954 which had guaranteed a mediocre product. ZAP appeared in February of 1968 and the Freak Brothers strip appeared later that year and if you want to have a little fun sometime have a look at some of the comics Marvel and DC were putting out at that time. Carry a barf bag. By the mid-seventies, the undergrounds had paved the way for the alternative comics, the ground-levels, the black and whites, and before the end of the decade there would be numerous new companies on the scene. Written off as a sixties fad, underground comix continue to this writing and the writers and artists who are still alive are still in the business. Many people now doing comics for the East Coast companies got their start in undergrounds or their little newave cousins.

Are comics better than ever? Of course, they are. Look at the primitive cartooning in any early issue of ACTION COMICS. Today's comic fan can get just about any fantasy he wants in dozens of different styles and formats. The French graphic albums have had a strong influence on contemporary American product and today's collector has the option to buy nice book editions of his favorite material from vintage Barks or American Flagg to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Earlier comic styles were revived by various cartoonists, causing a renewed interest in the originals, hence we are getting the early work of people like Caniff and Capp and Segar and Herriman and Crane. Hopefully, some libraries are buying these books and making them available to people who wish to study the medium and its history. Now, I don't want to say there isn't a lot of truly horrible crapola in contemporary comics; there is. On the other hand, if you look on the high side, you will find a lot of truly incredible art, some of it illustrating stories worth anyone's reading time.

If some or any of this applies to you, support your local comic store. Even if the owner is a schmuck and you don't like him all that well, remember he has made the move and gotten out there and done it for you and your friends. You guys who live in towns where the comic store went under know what I mean when I say it is a mistake to take the place for granted. When I was a kid, all I had was the drugstore and old man Mayo only got five copies of each comic so I was lucky to have gotten to read half the funny books I did.

-Clay Geerdes, 8/90

The cartoons signed M. Wuerker are from ZETA MAGAZINE. I think Wuerker is one of the finest carticaturists and political cartoonists around these days. Look for the mag at your local dealer.

Dear Mr. Geerdes,

Just a note to let you know that I'm really into your COMIX WAVOLA column in Comics F/X. I guess it may seem odd to you, but ug comix were really the first comix I read.. My uncle had all these FREAK BROS and such lying about and my mom and grandma thought it was cool that I was reading comic books. I was about 7 or 8 at the time. . . Could it be because of those books that I turned into a bohemian/beatnik/hippie/punk artist type? Yeah, the hippies were about the only optimistic generation of the counter-culture. . . "Punk" is almost nostalgic these days . . . I thought the big hoopla over the 20th anniversary of the Kent State shootings would end this "20 years ago today" media nostalgia thing as the shootings themselves pretty much signaled the end of the "sixties," but I'm pretty out-of-touch media-wise these days so I can't tell . . . I wonder if the new kids will become retro-greasers or something.

--ANDREW KYLE
Kent, Ohio

I know what you mean about the anniversary scam, but anniversaries are as convenient an excuse as any to reminisce about the good old days. The last time I saw Gilbert Shelton in the flesh was at a small local comic convention. He was surrounded by eight-year-old boys, which probably explains why a comic book about hippies continues to sell in 1990. Out here in California it is hard to tell where Hippie ends and Punk begins. I see a lot of longhairs and baldies mixing. Quite a few bald women on the scene. "Well, it ain't no use to sit and wonder why, Babe; If you don't know by now..." -Clay

CLAY GEERDES' COMIX WAVE 95 © 1990. P. O. Box 7094, Berkeley, CA 94707. World Rights Reserved. Artwork and quoted material herein © the artists concerned. Used here for promotional purposes only. $8 for the next twelve issues. Set of back issues $35 postpaid.

JIM RYAN ON COMIX IMPACT

I think comix deserve more credit than they've gotten over the years, credit for being a part of lives in little towns no one's heard of. I think back to my crowd in Elmira, N. Y. back around 1969-1975. By then, the scene in the Bay Area was already pretty lost in many ways. But it didn't matter to us.The Comix had just that moment reached Elmira. We didn't focus on comix, but there'd always be comix in somebody's apartment. Nobody was a hippie, just a bit cool, and we'd get high, drink wine, listen to sounds and read comix. We loved 'em. We could be kids again but not have our minds insulted by the content. We'd all read them; one or two of us could be called small-time collectors, having a hundred or so comix. And I went on to get *into* comix. I'd sit there for hours, poring over the comix like they were maps, studying every detail. We were wild but decent, didn't harm anybody. None of us *got off* on the sex in the boox. We just thought it was hysterically funny, and to this day there are all kinds of guys I know from back then who occasionally come up with a ***Jack shit*** or ***My thunder, what a whopper!*** straight out of Wilson. Wilson was universally regarded as superior to Crumb or Shelton, or Proust for that matter. I suppose this reflected our working class origins. Any any rate, all the comix were thought to be cool, but Wilson was IT. Elmira was anything but a hip town, and I'm pretty sure people from many towns could tell you a similar story. So that's the follow-up to my remarks, just man to man, about what comix really meant to a lot of people that nobody ever knew about--people who would never think of subscribing to a comix newsletter, for whom the comix were the comix, period.

4-4-90

WIMMEN'S COMIX 16 will be about MEN and can we take it? Is sisterhood really powerful? You wouldn't know it from looking at contemporary politics or the corporate rosters. The movies and tv are more sexist than ever and the ad world, well, my readers are referred to the excellent essay by Gloria Steinum in the revived adless MS. Gloria reveals the male hands around the throat of the body politic and don't be surprised to find them oil and nicotine stained. $2.50

COMIX PLUGOLA

The latest parody from Nice Day Comix, 911 Park St. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504-6241 is HARRIED WITH . . .UH . . . 18 YEAR -OLDS. $1 pp. Age statement with order.

first time he sped up to catch some crooks, but I'm nostalgic about that helmet the way I am about things like Wonder Woman's mental radio and Captain Midnight's decoder ring. You love things the way you knew them when you grew up. THE HUMAN TORCH would be a more interesting TV-series character. Hey, the pyros would go apeshit over him, huh?

ow about that rid[illegible]ulous costume on [illegible]e old Flash? Look at those tits. Is that really Dolly Parton hiding in there? Flash is just the latest incarnation of Mercury. I liked the comic in the forties. Flash had an office full of people who worked with him and was done in the spirit of Jack Kirby's newsboys and boy commandoes. I realize his costume had to be updated, because the little helmet he wore would fall up the

GEERDES' WORLD

I started COMIX WORLD to free myself. That was the main reason. A writer has a difficult time saying what he wants to say and when he has to ask an editor or publisher for permission to say it nine times out of ten he winds up saying what he never intended to say in the first place. Publications, be they tabloids or magazines, have built-in viewpoints. Call it whatever you please. Editorial policy. Slant. The editors have to lick the boots of the publisher who has to lick the boots of his major advertisers which means hype city. *You write for us, you write what we want you to write the way we want you to write it. We want those i's dotted and those t's crossed and no funny business.*

Now there is a certain degree of freedom for the writer in some publications, but even big shots like Herb Caen only get so many column inches in which to say whatever it is that want to say. The party line is always there beneath the surface. You want to get rid of those chains, you have to pay the printer and publish your own.

I don't want you to think I think my opinion is anymore important than yours. I don't think that. I like to see a culture where you have your say and I have mine and we can read each other and fight it out with our pens or word processors. I do want you to know that I am not going to take your word for anything. If I am interested in a subject, I research it and keep a file of dates, chapters, verses, etc., which I am always ready to use to back up what I have to say. I often write about comic books and I am always disgusted with the poor research I find in most of the *reference* books on the subject. I want footnotes, references, and accuracy, and I seldom find it. *A history of comics that doesn't even have a bibliography isn't worth reading.* The reader can't trust that history, however famous the author may be. I want to know where the information came from. If it came from an interview, I want to know when that interview was conducted and whether a transcript is available. If the writer is just rewriting Steranko or Becker or Waugh or Robinson, I want to know that so I can compare his book with theirs to see whether he has any new insight to offer.

In comics, artists have suddenly become authorities, and they are definitely not authorities on the history of the medium however many pages of superheroes they pencil a month. There are *some* artists who are well read in the field, but being an artist and being an historian are radically different preoccupations. I've listened to artists talk on panels at conventions and heard them make up stuff a mile a minute. I don't want to come down too hard on these egotistic bores, because there are a lot of books to read and they spend most of their time chained to the drawing board, but I would suggest they practice a bit of restraint when they don't have the answers and give some space on their panel to someone who has got them. I still think panels ought to fulfill an educational function, though I realize at most conventions they have become nothing more than promos for the product where the artist faithfully represents his company, defending it against any possibility of legitimate criticism.

When I started COMICS WORLD in 1973, I had been writing a column about comix for various underground newspapers and fanzines. I did a series on underground companies and artists for the Los Angeles FREE PRESS and in the process I learned a great deal about the whole comix trip. I had a number of good teachers ranging from Roger Brand, Jaxon, Gary Arlington, Simon Deitch, Harvey Kurtzman, Will Eisner, people who knew their subject. Brand had an extensive library and when he talked about comic art he always referred to one or more of his books, taking it off the shelf to show me the passage. Like Jaxon, he was an artist/historian and I knew I could trust what he said. Other underground artists I met at that time often knew very little about comics in general or underground comix in particular. Some admitted it, but others tried to fake it for ego's sake. Gradually, COMIX WORLD found its niche and its purpose which was to inform not only the readers who were curious about the subject but the artists themselves. They knew their own immediate scene, but there were small cliques of artists all over the world at that time and many identified with the concept of underground comix. COMIX WORLD served as a catalyst for these diverse groups. This same phenomenon occurred a decade later when many of us were doing the minicomix or newaves. Again, small groups of artists in various towns and cities began to connect with one another through my newsletter and subsequent publications like Small Press Explosion, Comix Fanola, Comix F/X, ad infinitum. In any generation, I would say there are X number of people who want to do comix. Whether or not they realize their ambition depends upon their connecting with people of like mind. When I was a kid in Nebraska, I did my own little comic strip at school, but there was no place to send it. There was no underground, no newave, and I never saw a fanzine until the early sixties when I chanced on some of them in a huckster room at a science fiction convention in some hotel in San Francisco.

It was a little scary starting my own newsletter. I had no idea who, if anyone, would buy it. I typed it on a small portable Smith Corona, the typewriter that got me through several college degrees. I put an ad in Alan Light's BUYERS' GUIDE and put copies around in the local comic and science-fiction stores. I went to conventions and left it there for people to find. I had worked on the first Underground Comix Convention with the guys from the Berkeley Comic Art Shop and I was heavily into promotion at that time. I had learned a lot of ways to get attention while writing for the Berkeley BARB and the Los Angeles FREE PRESS.

The newsletter was successful and nearly all of the Bay Area artists gave

me their cooperation. They did logos in exchange for subscriptions and passed the word around. But I had a ways to go to free myself as a writer, because I was basically doing hype for underground comic companies, not writing what I wanted to write. Not that I knew what that was, but it existed for me as a vague dissatisfaction. What did I get out of it all? I wasn't getting paid, so I was just free publicity. I had a certain amount of notoriety, but as what? I was accused of being an egotist because I put my name on everything I did, but I had learned very early in the comics game that the only way to protect something was to have my name on it. Even with my name on my logo, I wasn't able to stop a New York company from ripping it off. I had published CW for ten years and a company decided to come out with a magazine with my logo on it! I got them to change the name of the magazine, but they still own the federal copyright on the title. I had always understood that publication was copyright and I knew very few people in underground comics went through the process of filing. After that experience, I filed for COMIX WAVE and started using that. Today, I would advise any of you readers who intend to do a publication over a long period of time to file the papers. The snapper is you can't copyright an idea or a title. You have to copyright what you do as a trademark with a graphic symbol. None of us were into that business trip in the sixties. Crumb wasn't, so when the sharpies in New York noticed this, they ripped off his images and sold them on posters and glasses. a few years later he filed suit and some money changed hands, but Crumb got very little of it.

My newsletter is seventeen years old this October and I feel more comfortable with it now that I have reclaimed the space. For awhile there it looked like I was going to become nothing but a hype sheet with no room for any of my pet research projects, but I fought the impulse and took it back. My portable typewriter has gone the way and a friend is using the Selectric and the Canon is on a shelf and COMIX WAVE is typeset by a Macintosh SE-20 these days. The orientation of the letter has shifted, but not radically. I still keep up with the few underground comix that are published and I plug whatever else people send me. As for the editorial content, it might be anything. I write about anything that interests me. I print some opinions and letters if they are not too wordy, but the space is mine, and I say whatever I feel like saying at the moment.

Over the years I have been pressured to do this or that, but I seldom gave in to the pressure. Some people like reviews. I never read them. I don't even write what I would think of as a review though I talk about a lot of comic books and movies and assorted media. I mention zines that are sent to me and let my readers buy them or not as they see fit. I am not an arbiter of taste or a trendsetter. If I like something, I'll say so, but that doesn't mean anything. My taste is not yours. If I hate something, I'll say that, too. Again, it don't mean shit, as Mr. Natural would comment. I used to get letters asking me to do more interviews. Why? The form doesn't interest me. I have interviewed most of the artists who interest me at one time or another and all that rap is in my back issues for anyone who wants to read it. I see a lot of people being interviewed these days when they have done very little to make them worth interviewing. To me, it's not enough for someone to scribble off an eight page minicomic, then run around acting like a fucking celebrity and giving out interviews. Give me a break! Pay your dues and get some work under your belt and make a rep, then maybe you'll be worth discussing, but until then, show a little class. I have egotistical letters in my files from people who haven't even done a full length story yet.

My newsletter is a single sheet and I don't have the space for long-winded interviews even if I had the patience to do them. Every zine I look at these days tends to have interviews and reviews. Why should I print these things? I don't even run much preview art these days. I used to run it because no one else was doing it and that was the only way anyone got to see a sampling of the underground and newave art styles if they did not happen to have a head or comic shop in their community, but these days I see the art promoted everywhere I look so I ask myself why should I run it? Magazines and tabloids have the space to spare for that kind of free advertising. I haven't. I'm still your basic hobbyist. I could have expanded into a mag or a tab long ago, but I chose to do something else with my time. Those who have turned their comics hobby into a business have their rewards and their punishments. I appreciate their efforts and I contribute when I'm asked, but I am not sorry I chose to limit the range of COMIX WAVE.

People still do not write much about underground and newave comix. I am amazed at the amount of crapola I see in print about the factory comics from the East. Something like DEATH RATTLE or WEIRDO or BLAB comes out and it's hardly mentioned in CBG or COMIX SCENE. There is a Crumb page in Thomas Inge's COMICS AS CULTURE [University Press of Mississippi, 1990], but Underground comix is not even included in the index and this book contains a lot of overly familiar popular culture rap about Krazy Kat and Milt Caniff and EC. Joseph Witek analyzed the work of Jack Jackson [Jaxon], Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar in COMIX BOOKS AS HISTORY [University Press of Mississippi, 1989], but underground comix per se continue to be a clandestine subject, tolerated, for sure, but unlikely to be discussed on your afternoon talk show. Comics in general are like that, so taken for granted that the ordinary person would no more think of writing about them than about the morning cup of coffee.

COMIX WAVE moves the subject into the foreground and leaves other things in the background, a momentary reversal of reality, but one which pleases the writer and some of the readers.

-Clay Geerdes, 7/90

TEENAGED MUTANT HERO TURTLES? Yes, that's what they are called in England where the word Ninja is a no-no. Don't ask me why. I read about it in a local newspaper.

New minis from Tom Ferranti: THE FROZEN CEMENT EXPLOSION #12 and A LEG WITHOUT A BRAIN. 35¢ each pp. Say you saw them in CW and get a free hand carved rubber stamp! POB 114, Northridge, CA 91328-0114.

Doubleday has collected and released Larry Gonick's CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE. This material was done through Rip Off Press beginning in the mid-seventies.

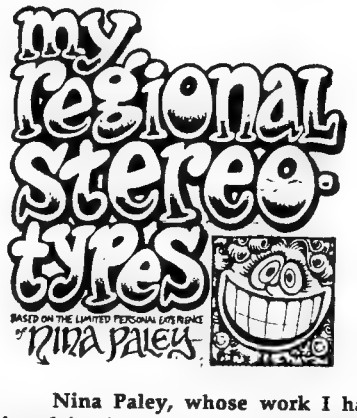
If I fail to say a lot about comix like Dave Sim's CEREBUS, it doesn't mean I don't like them, just that they are fondly familiar to me and I have begun to take them for granted. I am still amazed at the meticulous artwork in the CEREBUS series and if you have not read the stories, get thee to a comic book store and check them out. --Clay Geerdes.

Rip Off Press is publishing a collection of the work of painter R. Diggs. $2. If you can't find these comix where you live, you can order them directly from the company. POB 4686, Auburn, CA 95604. California residents should include 6.25 % sales tax and the postage and handling on each book is $1.25. I suspect you can send an SASE to Kathe Todd and get the latest ad.

EL VIBORA has put out a war special. The pages are all blood red with the white panels pasted up on them. Reminds me of Simon Deitch's THRILLING MURDER in which the only color was red and there was some kind of bloodshed on every page. $8 from J. N. Berengueuer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.

REAL SCREAM COMICS #18 is $2.50 pp from Mike Culpepper, 808 Stanley Street, Nelson, B. C. Canada V1L 1N7. DZ. I like to see comics like this one which was inspired by REAL SCREEN COMICS, a funny animal book which headlined two of my favorite cartoon characters, Fauntleroy Fox and Crawford Crow. Fox was kind of a simple character and he was always taken for a sucker by the hip antics of Crow, but in the end Fox usually won the game. Comics were like that in the forties. Today the good guys are always depicted as losers.

Joshua Quagmire's Cutey Bunny lives on at the Rip Off Press where she is featured in a satirical book called UNCLE JOE'S COMMIE BOOK. Uncle Joe would be the drunken asshole who cost a lot of people their careers during the witch hunts of the House Un-American Activities Committee in the early fifties. Tricky Dick Nixon was a member of that corrupt committee, so this ought to be a funny funny book. $2.



Nina Paley, whose work I have enjoyed in the SANTA CRUZ COMIC NEWS, has published a mini-comic. It's called MY REGIONAL STEREOTYPES. $L.45 from POB 412, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. I've reprinted her Berkeley stereotype and have to say I have never seen anyone who looks like this around here, but there are a few women with Easter egg dyed hair. I think Berkeley is a hard place to stereotype in terms of fashion because people around here tend to dress *down* most of the time and everyone I know wears whatever they feel like wearing no matter where they are going. Last time I went to the ballet, most of the people there were wearing casual clothes.

Roberta Gregory has a mini-comic out. It's SHEEP SHOTS, SHEEP TRICKS, and SHEEP THRILLS. 50¢/stamp from her at Box 27438, Seattle, WA 98125. I published a SHEEP THRILLS minicomic in 1984, but lots of titles get duplicated these days as the ideas continue to circulate.

Always send an age statement when you order comix these days, because many of them are Adults Only. It's been my experience over the years that things that say Adults Only are usually of more interest to eight-year-olds than to adults, but that is the way of our world.

MEGALOPOLOLISM

American magazines are all under the same corporate control. If you have any doubt, look at the ads in them and think about the cost of those ads. Anyone starting a new magazine has to deal with the same advertisers and, guess what?--they won't advertise unless you print their party line. When Gloria Steinem was soliciting ads to keep MS. afloat, she found that the majors not only wanted to control *where* their ad appeared but they wanted editorial say-so as well. Steinem surveyed the major mags and found most of them were 60% or more ads and that the content of the mags was often nothing but disguised hype for the products advertised. People were paying three to five bucks for hard copies of the same ads shown on prime time tv and no one was evaluating the worth of these products to the consumer. Sexism, racism, and homophobism were built into the ad structure and the power brokers in the liquor, tobacco, and junk food megalopolies were about as enlightened as eighteenth century plantation owners. Ms. sold out and accepted sexist cigarette ads for awhile, but folded anyway. This year the mag returned with no ads and a higher price tag. Whether they can make it or not will depend upon the readers.

What good does it do to start a magazine if you sell your right to say what you want to say before you begin? I'm not talking about Ms. at this point, but any magazine. One of the most unusual things about the first wave of underground comix in the sixties was their lack of advertising. In 1968 the East coast comics were nearly half advertising and the rest was filled with continuing stories about characters who were nothing but products. Would it surprise you to know that DC comics survived on the royalties from licensed products, namely Superman stuff, and would have gone under long ago if they had nothing to sell but comic books? I hate to see my favorite characters associated with products. What if I don't like the product? When I was a kid Superman was associated with a breakfast cereal. If you bought it, you got a comic character pin. I wanted the little pins, because I collected everything, but I hated the cereal. Well, my mother wasn't nuts. Why buy a cereal no one would eat? I had a tough time getting those pins. I think I traded other kids out of the ones I did get, but to this day Superman reminds me of a shitty breakfast cereal.

BUTT BISCUIT 1 is 50¢/stamp from Dean Williams, 555 E. William #9-F, Ann Arbur, MI 48104.

While I was visiting my mother in Lincoln, Nebraska in October, I picked up a copy of 4-MOST COMICS 1990, a nice DZ. I'd tell you how to get one, but like a lot of mini-publishers, the folks who put this on out did not put an address in the book.

There were only two Ninja Turtles represented at the annual Scarecrow Contest at The Nut Tree in Vacaville, California, this October. Raphael and Michelangelo. Sorry about that, Leonardo. Must be a character flaw. Cheer up. Most popular costumes for the under-five trick-or-treaters are Ninja Turtles, all of them.

CLAY GEERDES' COMIX WAVE

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CORPORATE DADDY

At this time in American history corporations are more important in raising children than parents. Let's start with infant formula--a destructive and costly displacement of the best food infants could ever consume. Let's go to war toys. Let's go to overmedication to tranquilize the superactive kiddies. Let's move to seven-and-eight-year-old-girls being taught cosmetics by the cosmetic industry so they can learn to be proper objects and subjects later in life. Let's move to music. However much we may like it, it's designed to blot out the mind walking down the street with the Walkman, never allowing a true reflection that might take the place of the sonic assault. Let's move to the addictions: tobacco, alcohol, the drug dealers, the television shows that show kids at an early age that violence is the answer to irritations and problems, and in between the violent shows they are taught what to eat, mainly high food--high fat, high salt, high sugar diets--with additives and chemicals, all the kind of food that predisposes them to bad health later in life and gets them flabby and obese.

Who's raising the kids? Kindercare is raising them. McDonald's is feeding them. HBO and Disneyland are entertaining them. They are spending more time with corporate products and services and entertainment and addictions than they do with adults. Now that's got to have an effect on them. It's got to twist and distort their values and rupture their sense of history. This is what it means to grow up corporate. The commercial media today say to the young in America who are civilly concerned, we will cover you only if you break the law, if you take over buildings, if you block traffic, if you smash windows--then you will get on the network news. But if you do research, if you have news conferences, if you lobby, if you litigate, it's not exciting enough. That's really quite a message.

RALPH NADER

If you think your dog has it tough, check out some of the dog cartoons in David Sipress' THE SECRET LIFE OF DOGS. $5.95 at your bookstore. A Plume original from Penguin.

COMIX PLUGOLA

It is curious that nearly all the great fortunes are made by turning beautiful things into ugly ones.

E. Nesbit.

I'm enjoying the new Classics Illustrated series from First Comics. Eric Vincent sent me a copy of THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU and the art is very impressive.

5 O'CLOCK SHADOW 4 is $1 pp from Not Available Comics, 3867 Bristow, Detroit, MI 48212. Features a Big Boy story by Matt Madden.

MAN HOLE by Jonathan Resh is 30¢/stamp from 1202 SW 1st Ave. Apt. G, Gainesville, FLA 32601.

DIDI GLITZES COMIC RELIEF

Diane Noomin will sign copies of TRUE GLITZ at Comic Relief, 2138 University Ave., in Berkeley on November 3 from 3-5 PM. Rip Off Press published TRUE GLITZ. $3.75 pp from ROP, POB 4686, Auburn, CA 95604. To order by phone, call toll free 800-TRY-COMIX. Age Statement required for all orders of underground comix.

There are four issues of BABY SUE and you can get them for $8 from POB 1111, Decatur, GA 30031-1111. #4 has interviews with Ace Backwards and Mary Fleener.

BUZZARD 2 features the newest work of Steve Lafler and Stephen Beaupre. $4 pp from Cathead Comics, POB 576, Hudson, MA 01749.

DISHMAN 9 is $1 pp from John MacLeod, POB 671, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1H-6L3.

Penguin has just released a collection of Leigh Rubin's panels, CALVES CAN BE SO CRUEL. It's $5.95 at your local bookstore.

WARTS AND ALL by Josh Alan and Drew Friedman is $9.95. Drew's caricatures have enhanced many issues of SPY, NATIONAL LAMPOON, and RAW. The page of comic shop clerks destroyed me.

FOX AND CROW REVISITED

I enjoyed reading your blurb on REAL SCREAM COMICS. Nobody else has ever mentioned the tie-in with the Fox and the Crow. They were kind of grade-B animals anyway--all the top performers were signed up by Dell except those owned by Harvey, or course--but they were the best DC could do when they went shopping for funny animal cartoon characters to spin off comics. Probably Tito and his Burro [Tito and his Burrito--ed.] were more famous movie stars in the beginning, but the Fox and the Crow soon became the comic book's best-read feature. In the early issues they actually portrayed themselves--animated movie stars, "toons," I guess--relaxing at home. The Crow was always trying to rip off the Fox--"chisel" was his word. In the beginning, refrigerators full of food were the prize, later it was dollars. The refrigerators came from the cartoon features. The notion of some ne'er-do-well chiseling food from a hard-working individual was a common theme in '40's cartoons. I have often tried to puzzle out if this demonstrated some deep difficulty of thinking that might be mirrored in statistical studies of eating disorders and heart disease, or interpreted by some sage of consumption as the harbinger of the greedy society that America became in the '40's. The Fox and Crow were Aesop's characters, of course, but like other creatures were given a Twentieth Century twist; now mice are not timid but brave and resourceful, enemies equal to the cat's strength. So Fauntleroy Fox, though not stupid, is not so smart as Aesop's animal, either. Fox is blinded by his bourgeois reverence for authority and order and cannot see through Crow's chiselling tricks. Crow, disguised with huge moustache and sheriff's star: "I'm da tax collector. Youse owe me for air tax. Foz: "Air tax? When has there been a tax on air?" Crow: "For years now and youse owe back taxes so pay up." And bewildered Fox, not wanting to break the law, does. Crow feels no compunction about any of this, he lives to chisel and must best the Fox if his life is to have meaning. John Pound once drew a Crow spin-off name Flip the Boid, who was so amoral that it was satisfying to see him wasted in his first adventure. But Crow wasn't that bad, just fulfilling his part in the particular social ecology of that comic, just living out the role assigned in his animal dialectic---when I wanted to do a strip about class-conscious animals, I naturally reflected on the Fox and the Crow and tried to spell out the relationship between Jim Davis's comic and mine in the title. You were the only guy to see it, Clay. Ars longa, memory shorta.

Mike Culpepper

Fox and Crow cartoon and comic book history

The Fox and the Crow were created by Disney-trained animator George Tashlin when he took over the cartoon unit at Columbia Studios in 1941. They were introduced in THE FOX AND THE GRAPES (Dec. 5, 1941). Bob Wickersham took over the Fox and Crow in late 1942, directing TOLL BRIDGE TROUBLES (11/27/42). He did six in 1943: SLAY IT WITH FLOWERS (1/8/43); PLENTY BELOW ZERO (5/14/43); TREE FOR TWO (6/21/43); A HUNTING WE WON'T GO (8/23/43); ROOM AND BORED (9/30/43); and WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE CORN (11/25/43). Four were done in 1944: THE DREAM KIDS (2/5/44); MR. MOOCHER (9/8/44); BE PATIENT, PATIENT (10/27/44); and THE EGG YEGG (12/8/44). There were three in 1945: KU-KUNUTS (3/30/45); TREASURE JEST (8/30/45); and PHONEY BALONEY (9/13/45). Three in 1946: FOXEY FLATFOOTS (4/11/46); UNSURE RUNTS (5/16/46); and MYSTO FOX (8/29/46). There were none in either 1947 or '48 and the final Fox and Crow was directed by Alex Lovy, GRAPE NUTTY (4/14/49). Going by Leonard Maltin's count in OF MICE AND MAGIC, there were twenty Fox and Crows. The characters were used later by UPA before Mr. Magoo and Gerald McBoingBoing and other more humanesque characters took over. Chuck Jones Wiley E. Coyote was based on Fauntleroy Fox.

REAL SCREEN COMICS began in the Spring of 1945 and ran for 128 issues, ending in 1959, though it ran for another 9 issues as TV SCREEN COMICS. FOX AND CROW were popular enough characters that DC gave them their own title in December of 1951, two years after the last cartoon from Columbia's Screen Gems. It ran for 108 issues, and became STANLEY AND HIS MONSTER in 1968.

Fox and Crow were always favorites of mine, Mike. I saw all of these cartoons when I was a kid and remember them affectionately. The pattern comes more from Mark Twain than Aesop. Crawford Crow was a flim flam man and his prototype appears in HUCKLEBERRY FINN in several forms. Crow is like Tom Sawyer suckering other kids to paint the fence for him. He's a snake oil salesman, a con man. Fact is, Crow doesn't really want anything Fox has. His lifestyle is radically different. He lives on the wing and he wouldn't be happy sitting in Fox's chair at all. This was always the fascinating thing about these stories. Crow hustles because he enjoys the game. The Fox usually gets it back in the end and that's the point for me. It is his fate to devote his life to security and comfort, while the Crow is out there living it up in the rough. Of the two, Crow is closer to his true nature, because in nature the fox is always on the prowl, never sitting in comfort. A lot of people were forced to live like Crow in the depression thirties and the cartoons with those full refrigerators reflect the memories of animators who often went home to empty ones. Historically, America didn't become a greedy society in the forties. Those were the war years and Americans were fighting the Nazis and the Italian fascists and Hirohito's army. As I remember it, everything was rationed and people had to have coupons and stamps to buy gas, sugar, butter, and other necessities. When the war ended in 1944 and 1945 and rationing was ended, there was an orgy or spending that must have appeared pretty greedy, but it was, in fact, simply a reaction to many years of deprivation. Today, the ruling elite in this country is greedy as hell and I'm sure any homeless person would identity with Crow in a minute. Fox would be seen as the self-satisfied guy who has his and could care less about those who are unemployed and on the skids.

There is a racial aspect to Fox and Crow that must be dealt with. Disney used crows as black people in DUMBO and three decades later Robert Crumb did the same thing in his FRITZ THE CAT. When Fritz was animated by Ralph Bakshi, he used the same symbolism. Maybe that's why we never see Fox and Crow cartoons on television. Too close to reality. Maybe the powers that decide such things think we would see Crow as the black man trying to get a piece of the big white pie. This is not true of the cartoon at all. Tashlin was simply imitating the success of Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd in that initial cartoon. Bugs was always bugging bourgeois Elmer and Tashlin used his aggressive manner and his Brooklyn patois. If you want other models, consider the vaudeville comedians. Bugs and Elmer were strongly influenced by Abbott and Costello. So, I dunno. If a black crow hustling a brown fox is considered racist by whoever is sitting on those cartoons, I would wonder how it is that a black duck named Daffy is still in all the video stores.

-Clay Geerdes

UNDERGROUND SURREALIST 6
$3 PP. Mick Cusimano.
POB 2565
Cambridge, MA 02238.

..an intellectual, as opposed to a dutiful classroom performer but like the *upstart clerks* of Elizabethan times, is always self-made.

Mary McCarthy
HOW I GREW

GALEN #1 is $3 pp from G. Raymond Eddy, 1156 Panama Rd. SE, Carrollton, OH 44615-9659.

HOW MILLS COLLEGE WORKS

Misunderstandings among the various constituencies of a private college are built into its very structure. Unlike a business, no one owns a college, and no one has clear authority to command the loyalty of all its constituent groups. The trustees are people from the outside community who act as caretakers for the college, both financially and academically. They hire a president to run the college, who in turn hires the college officers. These administrators own allegiance to the trustees. They hire a staff to help run the college and the faculty. But the faculty members' loyalties are rarely to the administration. Their first loyalty is to their own academic discipline, then to an ideal of higher education and the intellectual welfare of their students. A tenured faculty member is quite autonomous. The students, meanwhile, are selected and admitted by the staff and faculty. They usually don't know the trustees or even people in the higher reaches of the administration. The students' first loyalty is to their own intellectual and professional well-being, and then to their friends and to the college culture they are helping to shape. Alumnae are former students who remain loyal to that educational milieu they found so beneficial and seek to preserve it for others.

Markate Daly. East Bay EXPRESS, 9/14/90.

VETERANIZATION

35 men attended Sarah Lawrence, a women's college, under the GI Bill in 1950. The women students called this invasion of their campus *veteranization* . Students who consorted with the soldiers were considered traitors and were ostracized their entire four years of college. At a reunion one of the men said: *the girls hated us. They wouldn't look at us. If they had to look at us, they wouldn't speak to us, and if they had to speak to us, by God, they'd be sure to say something nasty.* Another said: *We were the outsiders, the unwanted. We were intimidated. We shut up, we lived on the edge, we told each other lies. Each os us was alone, even now, coming back here to lie to each other again.* information excerpted from an article by Linnea Due. East Bay EXPRESS, 9/14/90.

R. CRUMB REVEALS HIS ID

What about ID #1, Crumb's latest comic just in from [redacted]? On the cover, a little critter intended to symbolize the id, is standing on the buttocks of a drowned woman saying "Fuck 'em an' cut their heads off! Hyeahn!" Inside, Crumb degrades and debases the image of woman again and again. Well, it's *his* fantasy life as he likes to repeat ad infinitum, but isn't this type of fantasy strange coming from a 47-year-old father? For one thing it's a brutal, sadistic, and completely selfish fantasy. These cartoon women are nothing but big hunks of meat to be used, abused, and tossed aside. There is no pleasure for them in Crumb's fantasies. Is it funny? I don't know. Did you laugh when you read it? I didn't. My honest reaction was to wonder why Crumb has failed to develop. As I read his work over the past two decades, I always thought he would expand, that he would produce a longer work, but this has not happened. In HUP, Crumb has repeated his best shots with improved artwork, but the content reveals that he has not expanded his range of interests. I think this is sad. I know *why* it is, at least partially; within the comics community, which is as insular as any other special interest group, Crumb has always been praised as an innovator, as the man in the avant garde, the guy who opened comics up again after the Code—and this is all true—but what Crumb has never gotten from his tight circle of groupies is any honest criticism, particularly of his content. His fear of that criticism is evident in the many interviews he has drawn in which he depicts himself as a star being interviewed by someone he considers an inferior media clone. By interviewing himself, Crumb has avoided submitting to the kind of questions he would get from someone who had read his work and reflected upon it. Cast as a star, Crumb was denied the opportunity to grow. Anyone can see this by reading through the first five volumes of THE COMPLETE CRUMB. Crumb was exposed to a generation of young people through his own self-published comic books which were serialized in the underground newspapers of the early seventies. He said and drew what he wanted to. There was never a time in the history of comics when an individual had such freedom. Crumb automatically became a leader and his own views of that experience have been published often enough that they need not be reiterated here. Leaders, unfortunately, are hero-worshipped, never questioned. Whatever they say is "great" or "groovy." Crumb was not edited. Every underground publisher wanted one of his comic books. Underground newspaper editors routinely swiped his social stuff, stories like WHITEMAN, not his graphic personal psychoses. To the *acid heads* or *flower children*, Crumb was the ultimate satirist, the guy who tore the mask off the bourgeosie and exposed the inherent hypocrisy of the American Establishment, and he was funny. That was the important thing. He made the Establishment look ridiculous and the kids loved him for it. He made fun of Women's Liberation and the adolescent boys cum campus politicos loved him for that. He even made fun of Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n Roll! But stardom ultimately brought him down just as it did dylan and Mick Jagger and a host of other pop revolutionaries who now spend their private lives hiding in million dollar beach houses and British country houses. You live inside a closed circle, you don't develop a view of what exists outside that circle.

Well, here we are twenty years later and the kids are at least 34 and life is very different than it was when Haight was in flower. Many have teenagers of their own and are worrying about what effect listening to 2 Live Crew will have on their development. It might surprise you, but many of these people never even knew Crumb's name and couldn't tell you who drew the Freak Brothers any more than they know who is currently inking LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE. Outsiders to the comics community read the funnies in their morning papers and chuckle and hit the commuter traffic. Crumb never entered that world at all. The only person to make the transition from underground comix to regular strips is Bill Griffith whose Zippy is now syndicated through King Features. Crumb never *sold out*. He kept on drawing what he pleased in his own titles and in WEIRDO through the eighties until he decided to leave this country and live in Paris in mid-1990. By his own admission, he was never comfortable with the stardom conferred upon him during the Acid era. He enjoyed some of the perks, but hated having people after him all the time.

But is ID the way Crumb wants to be remembered? I can see that this is mainly some sketchbook stuff and a few random drawings like the one of Terry Boyce reprinted here, but I had a negative reaction to ID. It's a hate-filled vengeful book with drawings of a lot of women Crumb was ignored by in his high school years and nothing good happens to any of the women; they are just objects for Crumb's anger. I don't know who he is talking to in ID. Himself? Perhaps we will hear something new from him in a few years after he is settled in France. We have to remember that Crumb, like many other creative people who were lumped collectively with various sixties causes, has been reacting to that Establishment rejection. It will be nice to see what he does with his talent in a country that gives artists an honored place in society.

C.G.

TERRY BOYCE
(BEFORE SHE BECAME A CHRISTIAN)

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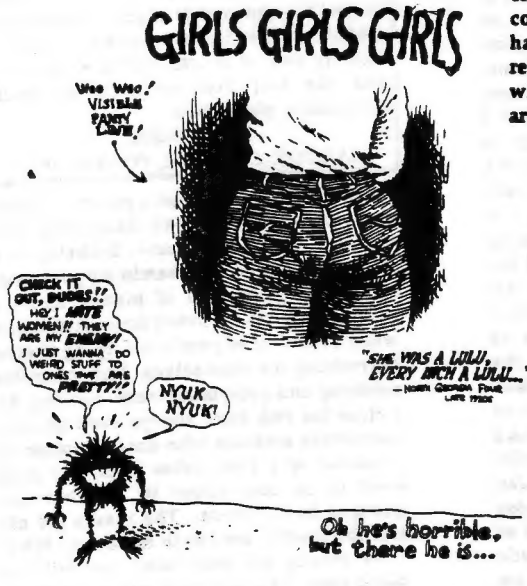

ID NO. 1, ©1990 by R. CRUMB. COMPLETED MAY 1990. PUBLISHED BY FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 LAKE CITY WAY, N. E., SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, 98115. ALL MATERIAL IN THIS BOOK WAS TAKEN FROM R. CRUMB'S PERSONAL SKETCHBOOKS.

This August Diana Russell and Niki Craft invaded a grocery store and an adult bookstore in Bellingham, Washington, where they tore up some copies of HUSTLER and PLAYBOY. They were arrested for malicious mischief. Said Russell, who lives here in Berkeley and teaches at Mills College: *The evidence for associating pornography with violence against women is stronger than the evidence relating smoking and lung cancer. We are seeing the mainstream media becoming more and more abusive, eroticizing violence against women and using it to entertain, not educate.* Russell's new book is MAKING VIOLENCE SEXY: THE POLITICS OF PORNOGRAPHY. Ah, there's a good living to be made in porn whether you're pro or con. These anti-porn warriors are probably already booked on DONAHUE's fall schedule. And isn't it a bit like beating a dead horse to attack PLAYBOY? For the last few years, it's been a tiresome tome full of the same slick ads that appear in all of the other mags of it's format. PLAYBOY stock has dropped to about four bucks a share. It's a boring pub, an idea whose time has long gone. As for men who are violent with women, most of the studies I have read show that they are sociopaths who hate their mothers. Reading or viewing certain kinds of pornography may modify their methods, but the rage against women is present in childhood long before exposure to any kind of pornography.

DARKROT

The opening scene of DARKMAN is in progress in Plex #6 of the Hilltop Mall near Pinole, California. It's a few minutes after one in the afternoon. August 30, 1990. Onscreen a white bad guy is using his cigar clipper to chop the fingers off a black bad guy one by one. In the row in front of me, the mother of a four year old girl is telling her baby she will be put in jail if she doesn't keep quiet. Two rows up an obvious grandfather sits next to his eight-year-old grandson. DARKMAN has an R rating [for Rotten?] and is not just a violent film; this is close to two hours of sadistic torture and brutality. The lead, a genetic engineer, is beaten, maimed, tortured, and has most of his face burned off, all at a leisurely pace so that the audience can enjoy the gore. DARKMAN is one long, relentless scream. At one point the mother in front of me took the little girl out of the theater and I thought it had finally gotten through to this stupid clod that this not only wasn't a movie for little children, but that it wasn't made for civilized people at all. But I was being naive. They were back in a moment with another big tub of popcorn and the little girl had to cringe there until the last blood-soaked minute of this latex loser. I hated DARKMAN almost as much as ROBOCRAP II. Why? Because the filmmakers are no longer fulfilling their function, which is escapist fantasy; instead they are attacking the audience and cheating them. Like the rest of you, I suffer from many of the frustrations of living in an over-crowded urban environment and I enjoy going to see thrillers to get a little bit of symbolic revenge against the autocratic powers that control my life. When I am subjected to what I see as deliberate psychopathy onscreen and it is directed at me, my fantasy is violated, not fulfilled. I do not have fantasies about cutting off people's hands and fingers or ripping their hearts out and I don't think there are many people outside of the state hospitals who do have such fantasies. So what is the rationale for DARKMAN?

What we are seeing these days is the complete loss of a hero with whom we can identify. I certainly can't identify with Robocop or Darkman. I can see a little of myself in that supercop in DIE HARD 2, but not much. The stunt men have gone so far with their expertise that the characters have been lost. To identify, I have to feel that I might possibly do what the hero is doing and today's films simply exclude flesh and blood people. The scientist in DARKMAN would have been dead, period. This is a supernatural film without such an explanation. The original PHANTOM OF THE OPERA was plausible. He was simply burned with acid and could have survived.

What the change represents is the loss of what was a major safety valve for the frustrated mass of people who work on the lower levels in contemporary society. The guy who goes to the mall to get off on a revenge fantasy has to be able to identify with the avenger and when he cannot do that he has been cheated at the box office. Instead of walking out onto the asphalt with the feeling of having gotten back at his oppressors, he walks outside feeling more overwhelmed and beaten than he did when he walked inside. DEATH WISH works for this guy; DARKMAN doesn't. The average urban worker can identify with Paul who turns vigilante and kills the urban scumbags who prey on us all and make it unsafe for us to walk the streets and enjoy the parks. ROBOCOP and DARKMAN force the average viewer to remain a spectator and in so doing operate in a manner which I find psychologically negative. C.G.

The qualities that attracted me to Jane Fonda were not those everyone recognizes in her today--political courage, leadership, commitment to feminist causes, incredible success in films and business, or the image of an intellectual who sacrifices neither her home for her ideas nor her ideas for her home. It was the vulnerability hiding behind the appearance of strength and self-confidence, her honest search for her true identity and, of course, her face, her body and the fact that we were perfectly compatible physically.

Roger Vadim,
BARDOT, DENEUVE, FONDA, 1986.

Berkeley has been called a gourmet ghetto by some wit in a local ad throwaway. The writer is wrong, of course. Berkeley is a ghetto of sorts, but few herein are gourmets. It takes a great deal of money to be a gourmet and we are living through a period when a handful of people are trying to take everything for themselves. This includes anything and everything worth owning. As a class the rich have always been greedy, insensitive assholes who used the mass of mankind as a slave labor pool, but they used to be cool about it. All that has changed in the 1990s. The masks are off and the fascists are out in the open. What little money the poor have left will be taken from them and they will be lucky to be allowed to hang around in the streets and beg like the untouchables of India.

CLASS INSTRUCTION

The point of a private school in the U.S.A. is to represent in its curriculum the purest conspicuous waste. Unlike the English public schools, our private schools do not aim to prepare a ruling class to govern--the exception used to be Groton. Our usual private schools are not vocational schools even in that remote sense. If there is anything *exclusive* (aside from the cost) in the whole system of private education, it is the *exemption* of a class of students from evident vocational goals.

Mary McCarthy
HOW I GREW

Is it possible to tell a joke in a town where the majority of the population feel the compulsion to be socially and politically correct every second of their lives? I came up with this routine about a comedian who walked out onstage in a Berkeley club and started to do his routine, but each time he began a gag he would notice someone in the audience who might be offended by it so he suppressed it and wound up walking offstage without saying anything at all. Can't tell a joke about women without being called a sexist, about black or Chinese people without being called a racist, about old people without being called an agist, about gays without being called a homophobe, about animals without getting booed by the Vegans and the Animal Rights Activists. Humor, of course, has always been sadistic and offensive while functioning as an escape valve at the same time. It is the rare person who has grown up as politically pure as many Berkeley folk would like to think they are. The ultimate joke would offend everyone.

What used to be called race humor has disappeared in Berkeley. It is all right to make fun of white people, white men in particular, but it is politically incorrect to make fun of black or Asian men. Think of it. Eddie Murphy can do a routine where he makes fun of the way white people dance and that's funny, but if a white comic makes fun of the way black people dance, that's racist. Now this doesn't mean people have changed. What it means is that black and Asian people are dehumanized by being excluded from the realm of public humor. When Bob Clampett's black cartoons were taken out of circulation by the guardians of the public psyche, they were not replaced with humorous cartoons which more accurately depicted blacks and their lifestyle. The blacks simply vanished from the world of cartoons until Cosby's FAT ALBERT came along some thirty years later. LI'L EIGHT BALL was dropped from NEW FUNNIES. He was not replaced with a more appropriate black character.

If you look at COAL BLACK AND DE SEBBEN DWARFS or TIN PAN ALLEY CATS today, you would be right in saying that these cartoons made fun of black people, but if you look at other cartoons from the same period you would find that they made just as much fun of white people and it would be more correct to say that the animators delighted in making fun of the popular stereotypes of all kinds of people. Black people weren't singled out for an attack by these cartoonists; they were included as part of mankind. To me, exclusion was and is the ultimate injustice. I can handle Richard Pryor or Eddie Murphy making fun of me and I think they could handle my making fun of them. C.G.

. . . things carelessly given life by the imagination may become frightening and dangerous; the writer may be destroyed by his or her second-rate creations--by the inferior work that survives to debase reputation, or by some casual production that catches the popular imagination and types its creator forever.
Alison Lurie
DON'T TELL THE GROWN-UPS: SUBVERSIVE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE., 1990.

FURTHER ON DOWN THE ROAD

Feed the hungry bee.
Ken Kesey

The first time I saw Ken Kesey's old school bus it was parked in the middle of the campus of San Francisco State College [now University] and Ken was on hand with some of the Pranksters for a session at what was then called the Experimental College. Tom Wolfe told the story of the bus and its inhabitants in THE ELECTRIC KOOL-AID ACID TEST [1968]. Your basic gang of acid heads on the road in the tradition kicked off by Jack Kerouac's novel ON THE ROAD [1955] which everyone was reading in the days of pre-fascist America. Kesey and his band drove across country in 1964 and videotaped anything and everything that happened to them. Most of this tape was seen in bits and pieces at private parties, but some of it was spliced together and shown at the San Francisco Art Institute and on other campuses that took an interest. Kesey was a cultic figure in the sixties, the man who foresaw the era of Reagan in ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST [1962], who presided over the famous Trips Festival of 1965 in a gold space suit, who made an album guide he called THE ACID TEST. People who lived in the Haight and Berkeley in those days followed the adventures of Ken Kesey as closely as they followed the careers of bob dylan and The Beatles. When the FBI started chasing Ken around the Bay Area, anything he did

or said became instant news. When the acid haze blew away and the sixties were declared officially over, Kesey was back in Oregon working the farm left to him by his father. The bus was abandoned to rust and roosting chickens. His family story is told in quasi-fictional form in SOMETIMES A GREAT NOTION. His latest book, THE FURTHER INQUIRY, continues the story of the bus and contains a lot of photographs. The Smithsonian Institute has expressed an interest in the original bus, but Kesey told an Oakland TRIBUNE reporter he "isn't sure he wants it to become a museum piece just yet."

Kesey was an inspiration to many people, certainly to me. I went to all of his lectures and happenings when I was a student and I read his books several times. When I taught English I used them in my classes. There was never anything flakey about Kesey. Like Edward Abbey, he was one of the real people and he told it like it was. He saw America as a giant mental institution in 1962 and it has become madder since then; anyone who doubts this should reflect upon Iran-Contra, the phony drug wars, and Iran-Scam for just a moment. Well, Ken retired to the farm and we had the Nixon Years and the incredible boredom, snobbishness, and snottiness of the Reagans, and now we have the cynical snideness of the fisherman from Maine.

So it was nice to look up and see a new version of Kesey's bus coming down Solano Avenue in Berkeley on the morning of Hallowe'en. Hog farmer Wavy Gravy was running for Berkeley City Council and Ken and some of the Pranksters had reunited to help with the campaign. What better way to get coverage for your trip than to load the media on your own bus and take them along? The trip started out in Marin County. My post office box is on Solano and we were on the way to get the mail when we saw the bus coming down the street. A straight reporter in a business suit saw me standing there and came over and I thought, Oh, oh, I now look like one of those older people who are always used for reaction shots whenever something unusual happens. What did I think of something like that? Think Wavy Gravy had a chance to get elected? I was noncommital. I just smiled and went along with his script. I was a sound bite on the evening news.

There isn't anything like that bus named FURTHER on the road in 1990 and it's unlikely a clown like Wavy Gravy will get elected to any public office, but the bus and Wavy are a lot closer to the real world 99% of us live in than are the millionaire politicians who have sold this country out.
-Clay Geerdes

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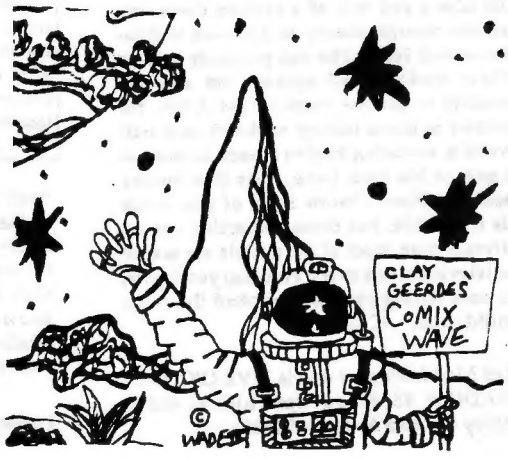
Krystine Kryttre has published her first solo comic with Cathead Comics. DEATH WARMED OVER collects her art from 1985-90 and it is $3.75 pp from POB 576, Hudson, MA 01749. No one draws like Krystine as you can see from the sample panels shown here. -C.G.

CEREBUS continues with issue 139. The aardvark does not appear in this strange story, MELMOTH ZERO. If you cannot find Dave Sim's work in your community, write to him at Aardvark-Vanaheim, POB 1674, Kitchener Station, N2G 4R2, Ontario, Canada.



The Berkeley Inn, once home to Bruce Duncan, Julia Vinograd, and other local cartoonists and writers was closed by a fire in 1986 and the city dickered around half a decade trying to decide what to do about the gutted building. A few days after our local election in November of 1990, the Inn was totalled by another fire and it looks like the building will go the way of the UC corner. I was by there the afternoon of November 9th with David Miller and the old brick building was still smoldering. The Fire Department had the streets closed because they were afraid of walls falling into the street. By November 12th, half the building had been demolished, and by the 17th the Inn had passed into history. The last photograph of the building as it was appears in the TELEGRAPH AVENUE STREET CALENDAR FOR 1991 and you can get a copy of this interesting historical document for $6 from Twisted Image, 1630 University Avenue, #26, Berkeley, CA 94703. Bruce Duncan is helping edit the HOMELESS VOICE, the newsletter of the Berkeley Ecuminical Chaplaincy to the Homeless, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704. Ace Backwards has a strip in the current issue. Send a $2 donation to cover costs.

Folks who remember the old Forum will find Amoeba Records there when they next visit Berkeley. Amoeba imitated Rasputin's successful formula for buying and selling platters, tapes, and CDs. The Heidelberg where I had many a quick knockwurst in my early student days at Cal is gone. New owners take over this month. The Bagel Works is closed, driven out of business by hold-up men. The 2500 block of Telly has become a skid row. I was held up by a junkie there back in 1974 when I worked for the Berkeley Comic Art Shop and lately there have been so many holdups and burglaries that no one wants to shop in that area.

Before blaming the victims, consider that the University has enrolled over 33,000 students, way too many for this area. Cal's continued expansion squeezes Berkeley in many ways and as in other urban areas there are developers who want to turn our town into a bedroom community for people who work in San Francisco. The campus is a magnet for certain kinds of criminal, mainly drug dealers and burglars, but con artists find the students easy pickings, too. The Jamaican switch has worked a number of times and with the proliferation of automatic tellers outside the banks a new hustle has begun. In this one, the con artist finds a likely student and tells him a sad tale of a broken down car and not enough money to get back to Palo Alto or San Jose. The con pretends to be a fellow student and spreads on enough sincerity to get the mark to the ATM. He borrows as much money as the chump will give him, swearing to give it back as soon as he gets to his own bank. Kiss that money goodbye. Now I know most of you think this is terrible, but these con artists are no different than most of the people we see on our television sets every evening; you know, the ones telling you how crooked the *other* candidate is. -C.G.

Matt Madden's new one is FIVE O'CLOCK SHADOW #5. $1 pp from him at 628 S. Ashley #1, Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

CEREBUS continues with issue 140. Nos. 46 and 47 are reprinted in 21 and 22 respectively. If you cannot find Dave Sim's work in your community, write to him at Aardvark-Vanaheim, POB 1674, Kitchener Station, N2G 4R2, Ontario, Canada.

I was surprised to hear that the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles had granted an interview to that rich establishment flack Barbara Walters, but the famous shellbacks are promoting their 1991 film THE SECRET OF THE OOZE so whaddaya gonna do?

Where does the MacNeil-Lehrer Report get those guys--all those stuffy, middle-aged, white, male *experts* ? Is there some kind of National White Man's Directory with a definitive list of pompous windbags? Last week, they featured a man named Philip Burgess, head of something called the Center for the New West in Denver, in a discussion of the Middle East crisis. Burgess was self-important, not particularly well-informed, and essentially full of shit. PBS could have dragged any random whitey out of any barbershop in Ukiah, and he'd have done as well. MacNeil-Lehrer is becoming a self-parody, with its comical parade of inside-the-beltway white men in boring, predictable discussions of current events.

Bruce Anderson
Anderson Valley Advertiser
November 21, 1990.

HORSEWHAT?

"However, the expansion of our businesses and the changes that have occurred on the world entertainment scene have convinced me that entering into such a relationship is nothing short of a duty we owe our shareholders, our employees, our creative colleagues and indeed all those with whom we enjoy relationships." said MCA president Sidney J. Sheinberg, justifying the selling of MCA to Matsushita for 6 and a half billion bucks in November of 1990. "If there is anything that is clear out of all of this, it is that global and vertical integration in the production and distribution of entertainment is a dominant theme that is going to continue, added Gordon Crawford, a senior vp of Capital Research, an LA investment firm.

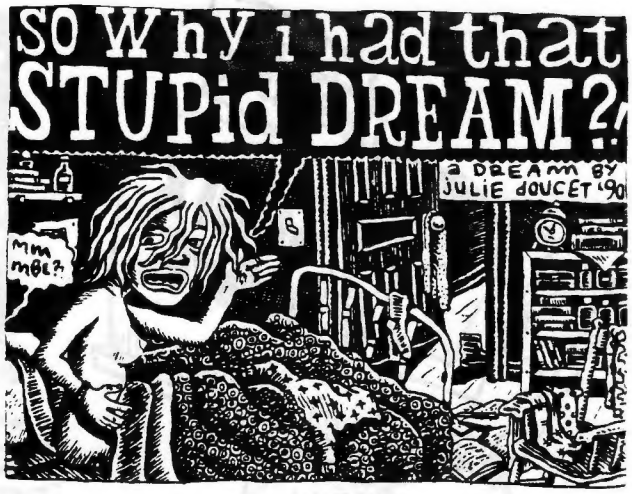
And I say what ever happened to our Anti-Trust laws? -CG

I do not like pornography. I have never patronized shops that sold it and certainly never wrote it myself--but I would not censor it, for I feel that infringing on the First Amendment could do the nation more serious harm than the circulation of a few lascivious picture books.

-James A. Michener. *Parade*, 11/18/90.

Peter Bagge's HATE 3 is almost as hateful as the first two. It's about the way people really relate to each other in contrast to the way most people think people relate to each other. I think. Don't quote me. You know how nutty Bagge is. He's just become a father, so expect his future funnies to be even further out.

I never saw great art come out of happiness.
-Sylvester Stallone.



CHICKEN LITTLE, noted for his or her insight into the evanescent nature of reality in the phrase *the sky is falling* is the subject of a new comic by surrealist Mick Cusimano. $2 from POB 2565, Cambridge, MA 02238.

RIP OFF COMIX 28 just came in. Nice to see folks like Julie Doucet and The Pizz therein. $3.50 from your local store. The usual amount of post-60's acid-flashback nightmare images proliferate.

BUTT BISCUIT's Dean Williams has moved to 3815 N. Greenview, #1-B, Chicago, IL 60613. BB is kind of the Twin Peaks of the mini circuit, a comic strip that continues from issue to issue. There are 4 to date and Dean will probably send them to you for $2.50 postpaid.

Today's heroes are here and gone in two seconds.

-Sylvester Stallone.

Latest minicomix from Wheatcake Productions are THE SO *WHAT* CHRONICLES 1 and THE GREAT IMPOSSIBLE 2. $1/stamp for both from Jeff Zenick, 403 E. Call Street #2, Tallahassee, FLA 32301.

At one time Rap was merely nigga music but when the boys from upstate New York came out as The Beastie Boys, rap was taken to number one on the charts. Rap became a valuable product. Who cares that those who created it as an expression and reaction to their oppression ain't getting shit for it. If the black experience can be made into pop culture, you know somebody's going to be right on it.

-Vini Beachem

Rip Off Press is publishing a graphic version of Robert Anton Wilson's ILLUMINATUS. The first part came out in November 1990. The artwork is by Robert J. Shea. $2.50.

Clark Dissmeyer will send you his latest four-pager, PROPAGANDA WAR, for a stamp. 2313 Central, #7, Kearney, Nebraska 68847.